

Fashioning transformation? Implications for the Politics of Recognition among Cape Town Youth.

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COMPULSORY DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the novel idea that fashion may assist in creating social justice and transformation in post-apartheid South Africa. 2Bop takes its inspiration from the classic arcade video games of the eighties and nineties, and the experiences of playing them as a child on the Cape Flats. The brand references Cape Flats 'corner shop culture' and 'Kaapse' (Cape Afrikaans dialect) slang. The thesis looks at the literature around the politics of recognition, pioneered by Charles Taylor, in order to try and understand whether a fashion brand with a broad customer base could produce a shared recognition between young people across pervasive apartheid divides - especially in Cape Town, which is still visibly and geographically divided along lines of race and class.

The research was done through in-depth open-ended interviews with 35 participants of different races, classes and backgrounds; as well as fieldwork done in stores where the brand is sold, and at various events around Cape Town. The participants divided roughly into two groups: a more multiracial, middle class group in the Cape Town City Bowl and an entirely coloured, working class group in Bishop Lavis on the Cape Flats.

Through two overarching themes that emerged from the data, nostalgia and authenticity, this thesis reveals the complex ways that people identify with their clothing, their history, and one another. Firstly, 2Bop inspires nostalgia for both playing the actual games, as well as the spaces where the games were played. However these experiences are politicized by the environments in which they were set, and reveal the contradictions of a nostalgia for an 'ordinary' childhood on the Cape Flats that involved both pleasure and pain. This sense of nostalgia is rooted in the anxieties of the present and this is illustrated further by the emphasis put on the brand being 'authentic' and the assertion of boundaries between who 'gets it' and who does not. The ideal of authenticity speaks to anxieties of class and race deprivation and social mobility between Cape Town and the Cape Flats – the fear of 'selling out', the need to remain connected to one's roots without becoming stuck, the desire to feel like one has ownership of an identity as a young person in a fledgling democracy that is constantly in flux.

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Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION	1
Social Justice in Transition.....	3
Fashion, Consumption and Identity.....	5
Research Question.....	6
Context.....	8
Chapter Outline.....	12
Limitations.....	13
2. THE POLITICS OF RECOGNITION: THEORIES AND LITERATURE	14
Introduction	14
Charles Taylor: Identity, dialogue and the ideal of authenticity	14
Recognition vs. Redistribution: Nancy Fraser and material inequality	19
Recognition: Product or Process?	23
Conclusion.....	26
3. METHODOLOGY	28
Introduction	28
Methods.....	29
Introducing the City Bowl	31
Introducing Bishop Lavis.....	34
Analysis	37
Limitations and Challenges	37
Ethical Concerns.....	40
4. NOSTALGIA: WAYS OF REMEMBERING THE PAINS AND PLEASURES OF 'ORDINARY' SOUTH AFRICAN CHILDHOODS	42
Introduction	42
Fragmented Cape Town, Fragmented Memories.....	43
Dimensions of Nostalgia	46
Communities of memory	53
Conclusion.....	59
5. 'GETTING IT': MEANINGS OF AUTHENTICITY, OWNERSHIP AND STREET CRED IN THE CAPE	60
Introduction	60
Authenticity: Race, Transformation, Ownership.....	61
<i>Bishop Lavis: 2Bop and the Ghetto</i>	62
<i>Traversing the Spectrum</i>	67
<i>The Importance of Ownership</i>	73
Keeping it Real: What it Means to have 'Street Cred'	76
Conclusion.....	81
6. CONCLUSION: POST-APARTHEID DRESS AND REDRESS	82
BIBLIOGRAPHY	87

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 One of 2Bop's most popular items.....	1
Figure 2 Strawberry cap. Taken from twobop.tumblr.com	6
Figure 3 'Too Damn Cool'. Taken from twobop.tumblr.com.....	11
Figure 4 T-shirt referencing a 'gatsby', a food popular in the Cape Flats involving a long bread roll filled with chips and in this case polony. Photo taken from twobop.tumblr.com.	14
Figure 5 Rolo and two friends, the one in the middle wearing a <i>Pac-Man</i> t-shirt. Taken by Rolo.....	26
Figure 6 Current map of Cape Town, with the City Bowl centred on the label 'Cape Town' and the vast dunes of the Cape Flats spreading out to the east. Taken from Google Maps (2014).	28
Figure 7 Dylan. Taken from www.twobop.co.za.....	33
Figure 8 Chloe. Taken from www.twobop.co.za	33
Figure 9 Rolo.	35
Figure 10 Aulrich.....	36
Figure 11 Three of my participants in Bishop Lavis.	37
Figure 12 Alvhin.	39
Figure 13 Vest with zombie motif from a game called Ghosts and Ghouls. Taken from www.smithandabrahams.co.za	42
Figure 14 Graphic from a video game called <i>Gals Panic</i> . Taken from twobop.tumblr.com	49
Figure 15 "Shoot/play games" T-shirt and "You lose" cap. Taken from www.twobop.co.za.....	52
Figure 16 "Skollie" (thug) beanie.....	57
Figure 17 Two of Rolo's friends, one on the right wearing a 2Bop cap. Taken by Rolo.....	60
Figure 18 "Raak Wys" (Watch out). Taken from twobop.tumblr.com	62
Figure 19 "Original Laanies" (players/main players). Taken from twobop.tumblr.com	63
Figure 20 Shoot in arcade. Taken from www.twobop.co.za	64
Figure 21 "Locals Only, Fut Sek (go away), Ama Game Kop (game heads)". Taken from www.twobop.co.za.....	66
Figure 22 "Hou jou bek, Werk jou Vrek" (Keep quiet, work hard). Taken from twobop.tumblr.com...	69
Figure 23 Friend of Rolo. Taken by Rolo.....	76
Figure 24 "Passion Gap" t-shirt illustrating the Cape Flats trend of removing one's front teeth. Taken from twobop.tumblr.com	77
Figure 25 Party in Long Street.....	80
Figure 26 "Salute" (Greeting or gesture of acknowledgement). Taken from www.smithandabrahams.co.za	82
Figure 27 Brad and Anthony. Taken from http://www.afashionfriend.co.za/sites/default/files/blog/bbb2_2BOP_04.jpg	86

*All photos have been used with permission of Brad, Anthony and Rolo. Where a source is not credited, the photo is the author's own.

1. INTRODUCTION



Figure 1 One of 2Bop's most popular items.

One day in the middle of 2012, I was standing in a queue at Cape Town International Airport, waiting to check in my bags for a trip to Johannesburg. A young ‘coloured’¹ worker who was collecting trolleys noticed my 2Bop sweatshirt – one of their most popular ones, which quotes a song by the rapper Notorious BIG: “Super Nintendo, Sega Genesis, When I was dead broke, Man I couldn’t picture this” – and ran up to me looking excited. “You know 2Bop?” he said looking animated but slightly confused. His sense of

¹ I use this term to describe those who were designated in this category by the apartheid government. Racially, it describes the group of people who are the majority in the Western Cape and have mixed roots including white settlers, slaves and Khoisan people. I will elaborate on this further on in this thesis. Although it is more politically sensitive to use the term in inverted commas, since I will be using the word frequently, I will henceforth be using the term on its own. In addition, I should point out that I will also be referring to people according to other racial classifications used by the apartheid regime, i.e. black, white and Indian - mainly because this thesis deals specifically with the issues around overcoming the barriers between those categories, and their continued relevance today. I do so while acknowledging that race is a socially constructed concept, and that races are not static or bounded concepts.

surprise seemed to come from the unexpected sight and curiosity of a white girl wearing something that was so obviously about being coloured. For me, the surprise was about the display of enthusiasm for a piece of clothing – how important could this piece of clothing be for this stranger to run up to me? It was clearly an unusual and unexpected interaction for both of us, and signalled to me that two young South Africans of totally different racial and class backgrounds recognized that they had something in common based on this sweatshirt. Perhaps what we wear, I thought – a powerful signifier in some respects of who we are – could create a shared platform for young people to connect, even fleetingly, across the entrenched racial and economic divides created by apartheid, as this experience had, thus linking it in some way to democratic or political processes in a country in transition.

In this thesis I am exploring unconventional territory, to find the connections, or lack thereof, between fashion² and democracy among young people of different races and classes in Cape Town. I hope to do three things. Firstly, I aim to dispel the academic stigma around the study of fashion that traditionally suggests that fashion is a vapid and mindless practice, only characterised by slavish imitation. Secondly, I hope to show that the examination of everyday consumption practices and fashion choices of young people in Cape Town offer an interesting and revealing way to look at social transformation in a post-apartheid Cape Town in transition, patterned by their racial, social and material realities. Thirdly, I hope to show that these practices are nuanced and multi-faceted, reflecting the connections and disconnections between people involved in them. My study of the consumption of a Cape Town streetwear brand called 2Bop will illustrate the ways in which past experiences, present anxieties and realities, as well as future ambitions in a post-apartheid city in flux, combine in subtle and complex ways. By applying the work of such scholars as Charles Taylor and Nancy Fraser, I hope to explore the potential for fashion to generate a political or ethical effect among young people in a divided society such as this.

² I understand ‘fashion’ to mean the practices and meanings around the consumption of clothing: personal style; trends; processes of choice and agency in what we wear; the embodied experiences of clothing; and as a performance or language communicating political and social realities, power relations, and change.

I should stress that I entered this research knowing fully that this was a novel idea and approach, and that the question I have asked is, and remains, very open-ended. This is a largely unexplored area, and I entered this study cautiously and without expectations.

Social Justice in Transition

Twenty years after the transition from apartheid to democracy, South Africa, and Cape Town particularly, still face enormous inequality, and the monumental task of overcoming the deep divides created by apartheid. The apartheid system oppressed people of colour in every facet of life, and classified all people racially as white, black, coloured, or Indian. In Cape Town, black and coloured people, pushed far out to the dry sandy dunes of the Cape Flats, were connected to the city only by railway lines and main arterial roads that took people to and from work every day. Partly due to the extreme geographical separation, Cape Town remains visibly one of the most divided cities in South Africa. Furthermore, not only are people still divided racially, but those racial divides are still closely correlated with material conditions.³

Transitional justice in South Africa is about correcting the enormous injustices carried out by the apartheid regime, and finding ways to move forward as a united “rainbow nation”. I contend that this should consist not only of the formal avenues such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), but should extend to the ways in which citizens have to negotiate their everyday existence in a post-apartheid country in which the legacy of apartheid is still seen and felt. In order to bridge those divides, a just and equal society needs to be created; one where people have equal access to the same rights, and on a social or cultural level are able to live ethically amongst one another. Drawing on theorists who write about the politics of recognition, I hoped to better understand the processes of social and racial change among young people in Cape Town.

³ See for example Nattrass N. and Seekings, J. 2001. “Two Nations”? Race and Economic Inequality in South Africa Today. *Daedalus*. 130(1):45-70.

I entered this research using the theories of Charles Taylor, the recognized leader in this body of work. Following the trajectory of Taylor's influence, I will consider three key theories on the politics of recognition (discussed more fully in my literature chapter). Taylor wrote on the back of the development of modern liberalism, and the resulting need to address increasing claims by different groups in increasingly multicultural societies (1991:61). Realising that the post-World War Two theories of social justice - which focused only on equal and universal redistribution of resources - were not enough to address the changing dynamics of modern society, Taylor developed a theory that took account of the importance of cultural claims and the creation of an ethical and just society through the recognition of such claims.

In his seminal essay, 'The Politics of Recognition', Taylor (1991:28) explains that people need recognition as equals in order to access their authentic identities – the ideal of being true to themselves - in order to flourish fully as human beings. For Taylor this pertains specifically to their collective identities – *qua* black, *qua* a woman, etc. This recognition occurs through an interpersonal dialogue, allowing us to truly understand each other and ourselves, and throw off demeaning or constructed identities through reciprocal interaction and recognition. Nancy Fraser, probably his most ardent critic, argues that matters of identity need to be situated rather in their material contexts, emphasizing that inequality then becomes central to theories of social justice (1995:68). Fraser's theory posits redistribution as a critical partner to recognition, asserting that either one is not sufficient on its own to create justice (Fraser,1995:69). In other words, addressing economic injustices (redistribution) becomes central to the 'recognition' that Taylor deems so integral to processes of justice. The third theory I focus on in this dissertation is about the process, not the product, of recognition. Authors such as Anne Phillips and James Tully articulate a theory of recognition that is more pluralistic. Phillips (2003:265) explains that recognition is more about citizens being able to use their own political agency to voice their struggles, than about recognizing and validating particular group identities. It is not about finding a definitive agreement on recognition, but about the provision of a democratic voice and freedom to question and challenge prevailing norms.

I see this body of theoretical literature as a useful tool to think about 2Bop because it speaks specifically to the challenges of a multicultural and unequal society, such as South Africa, and the need to find solutions that are not just about redistribution of wealth, but the way we think about and treat one another. It suggests ways in which we might think about the experience of a diverse set of consumers of wearing the same brand - one that is rooted in a particular historical and social context, and the possibility that the interactions between those consumers could have political or ethical salience.

Fashion, Consumption and Identity

Despite the wide academic dismissiveness of fashion as a site of inquiry, there are scholars who have argued that fashion – as an instance of material consumption and for all its consumerist excesses – may yet be a site of political, social and personal expression, enacted through degrees of active choice. A general body of literature around consumption and material culture exists that illustrates the importance of studying consumption in relation to social change, most notably articulated by Daniel Miller. Miller (2010:40) stresses the importance of context, arguing that the experience of being an individual and of the sense of self is radically different at different times and in different places, and that clothing plays a significant and active role in constituting a particular experience of the self and discovering who the self is.

The relevant literature on fashion is scant, but there are some useful and suggestive pointers that oriented my inquiry. Among the prominent works is Terence Turner's article (2007) 'The Social Skin' which posits that the surface of the body represents the boundary between the individual and society upon which socialization is enacted through the language of bodily adornment. Roland Barthes' (2006:35) *The Language of Fashion* is also a seminal work, in which he emphasizes that every bodily covering inserts itself into an organized, formal and normative system recognized by society (or parts thereof), and that dress must be described on the level of the social rather than on a purely aesthetic level. More pointedly, Gilles Lipovetsky (1994:236) provocatively creates a link between fashion and democracy, arguing that fashion socializes human beings into

change: in an open fashion society in which seemingly any fashion is accepted, social differences become less explosive, and function in a mode of marginal differences.

John and Jean Comaroff (1997) discuss the role of consumption of clothes and fashion in colonial South Africa, asserting that in changing and transforming societies, consumption in the form of style proved not just to be a reflection of existing realities, but an integral part of making a new social world in which meaning and identities were forged in the face of discrimination and oppression. Similarly, Deborah Posel (2010:160) explains that certain racialised patterns of consumption have emerged out of South Africa's apartheid legacy: "the desire and power to consume was racialised, at the same time as it was fundamental in the very making of race. This interconnection in turn has had a profound bearing on the genealogy of varied and contested imaginings of 'freedom'." Posel (2010) makes clear the fact that consumption practices are deeply imbued with political meaning, and that consumption is a site of contestation for citizens negotiating a new existence in a newly democratic society.

Analyses of consumption such as the ones I have mentioned above suggest that it is fruitful to study fashion as a site of deep political and historical meaning – something that changes, evolves, transforms, has plural manifestations, mirrors social changes, as well as being changed by those implicated in the changes, thus providing a window into people's histories, experiences and aspirations.



Figure 2 Strawberry cap. Taken from twobop.tumblr.com

Research Question

On the basis of an understanding of fashion as a performance or language communicating political and social realities, power relations, and change, I have attempted to investigate the extent to which fashion is, or can be, implicated in the pursuit of social justice and transformation. I am using the case study of a Cape Town based streetwear brand called ‘2Bop’, which takes its inspiration from coloured corner shop culture and ‘Kaapse’ language (a dialect of Afrikaans spoken on the Cape Flats), and its role in the experience of playing childhood video arcade games in the eighties and nineties. In a world in which we are all consumers, my thoughts going into my research were that shared consumption practices might spark an affinity between people across the divides created by apartheid - especially in the example of a brand like 2Bop, which has a particular social and historical context. At the time when my research started, the 2Bop website explained what the brand is about:

“Disadvantaged areas during apartheid South Africa had little to offer in terms of exposure to cutting edge international design or computer technology but the bootleg arcade games that used twenty cent pieces (a 2Bop) to play at the corner shop were a window into what was happening in the outside world.” (2Bop,2011)

The brand was started by two coloured men in their early thirties, Brad and Anthony, who grew up in coloured areas designated by apartheid, and around arcade games in corner shops, and as such have based their clothing on these themes. The brand has a broad customer base – racially and socio-economically, which is part of why I have been interested in it. It is a brand that I wear, as do many people in my social circle. As I suggested earlier, my interest was also particularly sparked by a number of experiences I myself had wearing the brand, which led me to believe that 2Bop may be a catalyst for social change among people across the entrenched divides of apartheid. Based on this, I entered the field with the following question:

How, if at all, does 2Bop fashion create moments of recognition and sharing across historical racial, social and economic divides among post-apartheid Cape Town youth; and what, if anything, does this say about the practice and pursuit of social justice among those youth?

This research question in turn produced a series of sub-questions:

- Who is buying 2Bop?
- Why are they buying it?
- What are the physical spaces within which 2Bop is operating?
- What are the attitudes of these young people towards transformation in South Africa?
- What has their experience been since the advent of democracy?
- What is their relationship with those on the other side of the divides of race, socio-economic status, etc.?

The argument I make in this thesis is that 2Bop is reflective of dynamics around and attachments to childhoods in Cape Town, particularly for my coloured participants. While representing the joys and simplicities of an ordinary childhood, even on the Cape Flats, there is also an edge to the brand's clothing, which hints at the violence and deprivation on the Cape Flats, and the masculinities that developed in and around the games and the corner store. For my coloured participants whose successes have pulled them further away from the Cape Flats and closer to the City Bowl, where success is more associated with whiteness, 2Bop is a means by which they are able to retain a strong connection to their roots, while also remaining relevant, current and 'cool'.

Context

2Bop exists alongside a number of other popular South African streetwear brands, such as Loxion Culture, Head Honcho, Butan, Young and Lazy, Amakikip, Baas Clothing, Thvggery, Noon Gun, and several others. Some brands also take inspiration from aspects of local cultures, while some simply aim to be a world-class street fashion brand. As for 2Bop, at the time of my research, the above quote of the description of 2Bop mentioned in my explanation of my research question, appeared on the 2Bop website. In recent months, the 2Bop website has simply showcased the current looks of the brand, while

Brad and Anthony have moved the sale of the brand into the domain of their store in Woodstock called Smith & Abrahams, where a number of different brands are sold. The website describes the store:

Hello.Aweh.Salaam.Eita.

Smith and Abrahams General dealer and Men's outfitters (S & A) is our tribute and update to the idea of the men's outfitters that were a mainstay of the retail space in Woodstock Cape Town going back to the early 20th century.

S & A follows the design philosophy behind 2Bop which they term as future nostalgia. The phenomenon of encountering something of quality and value in the present that one knows one will look back fondly and cherish in the future.

We set out to create the store equivalent of an imaginary friend, something that we wish existed filled with pieces and brands that we personally value and want to share with you.

This quote indicates the incorporation of 2Bop into a greater philosophy that connects to the history of Cape Town, and is congruent with the nostalgic memory and reference to a city that existed before the advent of democracy. I will address the idea of 'future nostalgia' and the 'imaginary friend' later in this thesis.

Anthony, who originally comes from Port Elizabeth, created 2Bop out of a dream he had his whole life to create his own clothing label. He started making his own t-shirts, printing logos and pictures from magazines from big skateboarding labels. Describing his inspirations, Anthony said,

"I was obsessed with video games, they were a huge part of my childhood... I used to buy video game magazines, I was very enthusiastic... Video games and skateboarding were a big part of how I formed my identity... There was this 'punk ethic' in skate culture – a lot of skate brands in the nineties were anti-corporate, anti-marketing..." (Interview,29/5/2013)

He started out printing a few cheap Chinese t-shirts, when

“One night I was wearing one of them at Fiction [a nightclub on the underground music scene]. The owners liked the design and asked me to do a mural at the back of the club, based on the design. Brad like the mural, and started doing design work for the brand in 2007, eventually becoming a partner in 2008... We haven’t stuck so literally to video games but we still take inspiration from the corner store culture.” (Interview,29/5/2013)

In 2010 the online store was launched and the brand was able to spread more widely. Anthony told me that as a small company it is difficult to really pick up sales, especially internationally, despite the fact that a local brand with a local influence has attracted a significant amount of international attention. Nevertheless, the brand ships to countries such as the US fairly regularly, and has been distributed on a small scale internationally. Locally, they only deal with independent stores. In Johannesburg this has been difficult, as Anthony deplores the “mall culture” there, while in Cape Town there is more of an appreciation and interest in smaller, independent brands. He believes that the nature of the brand is more suited to independent stores, because of the personal and particularistic concepts that diverge from the larger commercial and mainstream shops and shoppers. In addition they try to make sure that all garments are produced locally. This is in order to “encourage local industry... and it is rewarding to see that they are helping someone’s business,” (Interview,29/5/2013) while also remaining true to the inspiration of the brand.

2Bop’s clothes largely include sweatshirts, t-shirts, vests, caps (5-panels, bucket hats, etc.), but also include some shorts, socks, jackets, bags and other items. Some clothes explicitly reference video games by having the graphics from those games on the clothes, some are plain with just a small logo, some have the name of the brand in the style of the names of video games such as *Street Fighter*, and some have various Cape Flats-inspired designs or Kaapse slang phrases, such as “Too damn duidelik” (too cool), or “Raak wys” (watch out), which I will elaborate on later. 2Bop often does collaborations with other designers, which create variations on their theme, but still usually reference Cape Flats or corner shop culture.



Figure 3 'Too Damn Cool'. Taken from twobop.tumblr.com

The brand's customer base in Cape Town, although diverse, is quite divided. As I will detail in this thesis, my research took place firstly within the City Bowl of Cape Town, and secondly in Bishop Lavis, a working class area in the Cape Flats. To put it simply: in the City Bowl, their customer base is multi-racial and middle class, while in Bishop Lavis it is entirely coloured, and working class. Most of their customers are male, as the clothes are designed for men, although there are a small percentage of women who buy the clothes (myself included). Many of my participants were in their late twenties or early thirties, so they grew up in the late eighties and early nineties and have actual memories of living under apartheid. However, some were of the 'born-free' generation, meaning that they were born or grew up after the advent of democracy in 1994. These participants were in their early or mid-twenties. This is interesting, as those participants feel just as connected to the brand, despite having grown up after apartheid and in different circumstances to those referenced by the brand.

Much of the brand's marketing happens over social media. Many of their customers are loyal followers or friends of theirs, or know the brand because they are part of a certain City Bowl scene – they attend the same bars and clubs, move in the same social circles, are fans of the same music, etc. Those in Bishop Lavis know the brand through Rolo Rozay, their informal trader on the Cape Flats, who brings stock into Bishop Lavis and contacts people through various messaging services to tell them what stock he has. There are also a number of people who buy the brand because they have seen it featured on a blog, or in a fashion magazine such as Elle, or because someone famous wears a piece of

their clothing. There are also a few South African rappers, skateboarders, artists, and other people that they like and support who are sponsored by 2Bop, including a few of my participants.

The clothes are not cheap, but prices are also not particularly expensive relative to many streetwear brands. Currently, t-shirts range between R250 and R350; vests are up to R440 (depending on the fabric used); caps range between R250 and R350; jackets and shorts cost up to R700; socks are R150; and there are other special items like tog bags that frequently cost over R1000. The clothing is sold in two streetwear stores in Cape Town – Baseline and Shelflife, and a boutique called The Lot. It is, of course, also sold in Smith & Abrahams in Woodstock, on their website, and through Rolo. Given the high prices, many customers in Bishop Lavis cannot afford the items immediately, so Rolo sometimes arranges a lay-bye, whereby the customer pays off the amount over a specified period of time, after which they are allowed to have the item.

Chapter Outline

The second chapter of this dissertation will explain in deeper detail the various theories of the politics of recognition. I will detail the theories of Charles Taylor and his rivals, such as Nancy Fraser and James Tully, to explain how the literature on the politics of recognition assists in understanding transformation of an increasingly multicultural society. The third chapter will detail the methodology used in researching this thesis, as well as ethical considerations. The fourth chapter consists of a sociological account of my data, explaining why it is interesting and important in the context of a city in transition. Contextualising the importance of Cape Town as an important site of inquiry, I will use the overarching theme that came up in my data of nostalgia to illustrate the various ways in which 2Bop represents parts of the pasts and presents of its customers. In the fifth chapter, I will explore the emphasis on ‘authenticity’ that my participants put on the brand and the significance of this, especially for my coloured participants growing up on the Cape Flats. Finally, my conclusion will revisit the data and analysis and suggest the

ways in which the Politics of Recognition may be applied, and the usefulness of both the theory and the data in explaining the role of fashion in transformation.

Limitations

In practical terms, this study is limited to Cape Town. Broadening my study into another city would firstly be logistically difficult, as I did not have the time or space in this thesis to research the history, sociology and important characteristics of another city that may affect consumption practices. Furthermore, 2Bop is based in Cape Town, and has strong references to the Cape Flats, so it made most sense to do my research in Cape Town.

In academic terms, I will not be focusing on the production of 2Bop clothing, but on its consumption – the buying and wearing of the brand, and the ways in which these are interpreted and communicated. Focusing on production would bring in a whole range of new and complex issues, that may have to do with the textile industry in South Africa, value chains, and the issue of the connection or disconnection between those making and those buying, among other things, and this is beyond the scope of this study.

2. THE POLITICS OF RECOGNITION: THEORIES AND LITERATURE



Figure 4 T-shirt referencing a 'gatsby', a food popular in the Cape Flats involving a long bread roll filled with chips and in this case polony. Photo taken from twobop.tumblr.com.

Introduction

Understanding how fashion may be related to recognition is complicated by the fact that there are very different competing theories about what “recognition” itself means. There is no simple formula to understand the relationship, and no apparent or direct causal link between fashion and recognition. We need a nuanced approach and understanding of the theories to both ask and answer the question about how recognition relates to fashion in multiple ways. Furthermore, understanding what the term ‘recognition’ means and how it is useful, will help to examine the challenge in post-apartheid South Africa to build a nation from so many diverse groups and individuals. In this chapter, I will explore in detail the theories of Charles Taylor, Nancy Fraser, and James Tully and his associates, in order to make sense of the concept of recognition, so that it may be applied to my data.

Charles Taylor: Identity, dialogue and the ideal of authenticity

Charles Taylor, who laid the cornerstone for contemporary theories of recognition, based his understanding of what recognition means on the way this idea was conceptualised by Hegel (Taylor,1991:50). Hegel articulated the idea that we can only fully flourish as humans if we are recognised, as every consciousness seeks the recognition of another. Hegel's dialectic of the master and the slave states that in a hierarchical society based on honour, people cannot ever find the recognition they seek, as those without honour remain unrecognised, and those with honour see no value in being recognised by those without honour (Taylor,1991:50). Thus, the struggle for recognition can only be satisfied through a process of reciprocal recognition by equals. Based on this idea, Taylor's seminal essay, (1991:25) 'The Politics of Recognition' explains the need to develop a contemporary theory of recognition as a response to modern liberalism and the struggles of multiculturalism. Taylor (1991:61) points out that as societies have become more multicultural, more cultural communities have developed competing claims in the interests of their own survival; and so a theory is needed to understand how diverse peoples may live together ethically, in a just and equal society (Taylor,1991:25). For many years, social justice had been theorised in terms of 'redistribution'. Fraser and Honneth, (2003:1), in describing the history of social justice, explain that in the great World War II philosophies of egalitarianism, conflicts were disputed in terms of equal and universal distribution of resources. However, it became increasingly clear to theorists that redistributive theories were not enough to create a just and equal society in a modern context.

The development of Taylor's theory divides into two strands, which he aligns with two historical changes. The first change was the collapse of social hierarchies at the end of the eighteenth century, which was the basis for 'honour', a concept necessarily linked to inequality (as for some to have honour, others cannot) (Taylor,1991:27). Out of this came the modern notion of dignity, used as an egalitarian and universalist term to describe the inherent "dignity of human beings" (Taylor,1991:27). This move from honour to dignity produced a "politics of universalism" (Taylor,1991:37), emphasising the equal dignity of all citizens, and the equalisation of rights and entitlements. Taylor associates this with a certain reading of liberalism – procedural liberalism - by which equal rights and the

protection of individual freedoms are guaranteed by the state. (Cooke,1997:21). Secondly, the emphasis on recognition was reinforced by the new idea of an ‘individualised’ identity that emerged at the end of the eighteenth century. This refers to an identity that is particular to me, arising out of the ideal of being true to myself and my way of being – the ideal of authenticity (Taylor,1991:28). In the eighteenth century, the view that human beings have an intuitive moral sense of what is right and wrong, that morality has a voice within us, developed in response to the view that knowing right and wrong was about calculating consequences which were about divine reward or punishment (Taylor,1991:28). Quoting Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Taylor states that “our moral salvation comes from recovering authentic moral contact with ourselves” (Taylor,1991:29). He explains that this development of the modern notion of identity has led to a politics of difference, by which every person or group should be recognised for their distinctness. Though both are based on the liberal notion of equal respect, Taylor (1991:43) explains that the politics of equal dignity demands that we treat people in a difference-blind manner; while the politics of difference demands that we recognise or foster particularity.

Taylor situates his theory in relation to other liberal theories on social justice. Ronald Dworkin, specifically, differentiates between two kinds of moral commitment. On one hand, we all have different perspectives on what constitutes the good life (“substantive” commitments), which we should all strive for (Taylor,1991:56). On the other hand, we also have a (“procedural”) commitment to treat each other fairly and equally, regardless of these differing conceptions. His position is that a liberal society must make a procedural commitment by remaining neutral on the issue of the good life, and thus refrain from taking a substantive view by not taking any particular position on collective goals (Taylor,1991:60). Taylor suggests a different form of liberalism, in which sometimes the importance of uniform treatment is outweighed by the importance of cultural survival, and thus the obligation to distinct groups goes beyond being purely procedural, to being more substantive (Taylor,1991:61). He (1991:63) goes back to the issue of multiculturalism, which has to do with addressing the imposition of some ‘superior’ cultures on others, especially in societies where there is a history of

colonialism or marginalisation of certain segments of the population, a very good example being South Africa. Taylor argues that not only does equal recognition mean that cultural survival for certain groups be acknowledged as a legitimate goal, but that “we all *recognise* the equal value of different cultures; that we not only let them survive, but acknowledge their *worth*” (Taylor,1991:64).

The preceding discussion about identity, authenticity, and procedural vs. substantive recognition in Taylor’s theory, leads me to explain the main thrust of Taylor’s theory: that understanding and positioning who I am in a just society depends on my dialogical relations with others (Taylor,1991:34) as the basis upon which I am recognised for who I authentically am. Taylor explains that we can only understand ourselves by acquiring rich human ‘languages’, which include not just spoken words, but other modes of expression, such as art, gesture, love, etc. – which surely does not exclude possibly fashion, which I explore in this thesis. People acquire these languages not on their own, but through interaction with “significant others” - those who matter to us, such as a group we identify with, e.g. a culture, ethnicity, gender, etc., who introduce them to us (Taylor,1991:32). Taylor stresses that in the absence of this dialogue, misrecognition or nonrecognition (the refusal or lack of recognition), can lead to a damaged self-identity: instead of acknowledging my authentic identity, society may be mirroring back an image of myself that is constructed and demeaning. Taylor (1991:26) uses the example of black people who live in a society dominated by white people, which has for centuries projected a demeaning picture of black people. He asserts that the danger here is that some people may be unable to resist internalising this image and this thus becomes a strong instrument for oppression. According to Taylor, due recognition is thus more than a courtesy we owe; it is a vital human need (1991:26).

Further, Taylor argues that demands for recognition are based on the grounds upon which recognition was previously denied, e.g. as black, as a woman, as a homosexual (Kruks, 2001:85). The authentic identity Taylor speaks of centres on recognising the genuine meanings of being black or being a woman or being a homosexual, instead of oppressive and derogatory meanings constructed by outsiders of those identities. So, it is not about

the personalised and particular attributes and features of the individual, but the attributes and features of the groups with which he/she identifies. For example, my identity as a woman is an essential part of my identity as an individual, and so in order for me to live an ethical life in which I am treated as an equal, particularly by men, an ‘authentic’ understanding and recognition of my value and worth *as a woman* is needed. Ultimately, discovering what being human is for me, and enabling this through reciprocity with others, through my collective identity, is a moral imperative, because the result is equal recognition, which, according to Taylor (1991:36), is essential for a healthy, democratic society. If Taylor’s argument has merit, then the diverse and different people in South Africa, and Cape Town specifically, should be engaged in a dialogue with one another in order to progress towards the ideal of a democracy in which everyone is able to live equally and ethically amongst one another. This dialogue may not be literally through words, but also through other forms of expression, one of which may be the clothes they wear, that ‘speak’ to other people who ‘speak’ back through their own clothing, as I explore in this thesis.

Taylor’s work, however, has been the subject of strong theoretical critique. One of a number of problems in Taylor’s theory that cannot be ignored in a contemporary setting is his focus specifically on the individual *qua* the group he/she belongs to. This means that individuals are only considered so in relation to the goals and needs of the group, which in itself is a problematic term as races, genders, ethnicities are not bounded ‘things’ with solid prescribed attributes. Seyla Benhabib (2002:53) asks, “Why should the individual’s search for authentic selfhood be subordinated to the struggles of any of these collectivities, unless we have some ontological or hierarchical ordering of the groups to which the individual belongs, so that one group, more than other groups, can be said to portray a more authentic expression of one’s individuality?” Benhabib (2002:53) states, “the right of the modern self to authentic self-expression derives from the moral right of the modern self to the autonomous pursuit of the good life, not vice versa”. By Benhabib’s view, if some individuals or groups are subordinated by the claims of other groups, which are considered more authentic, their search for the good life is compromised, as their identities and self-expression are not recognised as authentic

enough. Furthermore, it is problematic to consider cultures or groups as wholes that we may judge, as all movements struggling for recognition have their own complex internal struggles and cultural patterns (Benhabib,2002:58). Doing so risks reifying them, and placing people in fixed roles in fixed categories.

Appiah (1991:153) also raises issues about Taylor's theories on identity and authenticity, by discussing the problems of Taylor's ideal of authenticity as being directly linked to Taylor's conception of identity; and of individual identities being expressed through distinct collective identities. He says, "My being, say, an African American among other things, shapes the authentic self that I seek to express. And it is, in part, because I seek to express myself that I seek recognition of an African-American identity" (Appiah,1991:153). The ethics of authenticity demand that we express who we are inside, as well as recognition in social life as black, gay, a woman, etc. However, Appiah (1991:161) points out that demanding respect for people as blacks and gays, for example, suggests that there are certain modes or proper ways of being black and gay – expectations and demands. It requires that skin colour and bodies should be "acknowledged politically in ways that make it hard for those who want to treat their skin and their sexual body as personal dimensions of the self" (Appiah,1991:163). Authentic is a word that assumes that there is a certain "authentic" way of expressing and being part of a collective.

Recognition vs. Redistribution: Nancy Fraser and material inequality

One of Taylor's most ardent opponents and a central theorist on recognition, Nancy Fraser, agrees with a number of other theorists, such as Appiah and Benhabib above, that it is highly problematic to have a theory that judges cultures based on their claims to the good life, as it implies that some claims are more authentic than others without providing the standards by which this can be judged; and also warns against reifying those collectives. As I will explain below, Fraser instead insists on a more neutral approach, bringing both redistribution and recognition under the same heading of justice, in a theory

which focuses less on intersubjective judgements than the according of equal status to all individuals and collectives.

Fraser (1995:68) argues that struggles for recognition are situated in the context of extreme material inequality, in terms of income, access to paid work, education, healthcare, etc. and the politics of recognition must be reframed to take account of the abiding exploitation. Thus, she suggests a critical theory of recognition, which “identifies and defends only those versions of the politics of difference that can be coherently combined with the social politics of equality” (Fraser,1995:69). This means, for Fraser, that justice requires both (economic) redistribution and (cultural) recognition, two problematics which had been largely dissociated from each other in theories of justice, and which, she says, should rather be conceptualised as supporting than undermining one another.

The redistribution problematic refers to socio-economic injustices, rooted in the political-economic structure of society, such as exploitation, economic marginalisation and deprivation, while the recognition problematic is cultural or symbolic injustice, rooted in social patterns of representation, interpretation and communication, including cultural domination, nonrecognition, and disrespect (Fraser,1995:71). Thus, the remedy for the cultural or symbolic problematic is some kind of cultural or symbolic change, which may include positively revaluing disrespected identities, recognising and valorising cultural diversity, etc. Although she keeps the two spheres analytically distinct, Fraser (1995:72) acknowledges that the two are inextricably connected: material economic injustices always have a cultural dimension, and every cultural practice has material supports. This is a very important point in the South African context, in which race and material inequalities are still so closely correlated, as the apartheid regime accorded material conditions with race, and thus Fraser’s work is interesting for the purposes of this study.

To explain this issue further, Fraser (1995:74) points out that recognition claims often call for the affirming of the value of a specific group, which reinforces differentiation; while redistribution claims often call for abolishing the economic arrangements that

underpin group specificity. The two seem to contradict one another. This redistribution-recognition dilemma is articulated in her examples of gender and race as being “bivalent mode[s] of collectivity” (Fraser,1995:80). Using the race example, as in South Africa, on one hand, race structures the capitalist division of labour in that low-paid, low-status, menial and domestic occupations are disproportionately held by people of colour, as part of the historical legacy of colonialism, slavery and apartheid. The political-economic structure in South Africa thus generates race-specific modes of exploitation, marginalisation and deprivation (Fraser,1995:80). On the other hand, aside from the political-economic dimensions, there are also cultural-valuational dimensions to racial injustice – constructed norms that valorise traits associated with whiteness, and devalue things associated with blackness. People of colour are faced with norms that work to disadvantage them (Fraser,1995:81). This is relevant to my study of 2Bop because of the brand’s references to, and valorisation of, coloured identities and cultures of the Cape Flats, in contrast to the oppressive and demeaning representations of coloureds under apartheid. It also speaks to my examination of the past and present realities of my participants in relation to their race and, accordingly, their class and material conditions.

The solution to these injustices is divided into two possible options, suggested by Fraser: affirmation and transformation. In terms of racial injustices, affirmative redistribution remedies would comprise a reallocation of existing goods to existing categories, while leaving the underlying political-economic structure intact and supporting the existing group differentiation according to racial classifications created by apartheid. A local example is the policies of affirmative action and Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) in South Africa – policies which have only deepened inequality in South Africa by creating a small very wealthy black elite, while the majority of the population remain desperately poor. Transformative remedies would redress unjust distribution by transforming the underlying political economic structure altogether, in a move from a liberal welfare state to a socialist state and blurring group boundaries (Fraser,1995:84). On the recognition level, affirmative remedies would mean the reallocation of respect to different categories and the support of group differentiation – which is what Taylor’s theory suggests (Fraser,1995:87). A transformative remedy would mean blurring group

differentiation, which would mean a complete restructuring of relations in society (Fraser,1995:87). Certainly there are issues with constantly affirming the racial classifications created by apartheid that constantly reinforce the boundaries between black and white. However, the problem with this approach is that the need or desire for recognition from citizens themselves often does not express a need or desire to do away with racial categories, and many of my participants illustrate this in their pride and defence of being coloured.

Fraser treats recognition as an issue of social status, not differentiated group identity, by which misrecognition means social subordination in being prevented from participating as a peer in social life rather than the depreciation and deformation of group identity (Fraser,2001:24). Fraser (2001:22) explains that usually theories of justice that traditionally see it as an issue of redistribution, associate justice with “the right” and the good life with “the good”. Unlike Taylor’s identity model, her status model is compatible with the priority [she places] of the right over the good,” aligning it with morality instead of ethics. Under her conception of justice, then, recognition is not linked with the need to make subjective judgements about the good life, but rather the obligation, along with redistribution, to do what is right for society in order to change the conditions that perpetuate or risk misrecognition. She claims that this embraces the spirit of modernity which allows individuals and groups to choose and pursue what they define as the good life as they wish as long as it doesn’t impinge on the rights of others (Fraser,2001:27). In a South African context, the diverse post-apartheid government and population has to find a way of interacting together, which does not reproduce the oppressive and unequal patterns created by apartheid and enables people to pursue their own ideals of the good life on an equal par. Fraser provides an interesting perspective for my research, one which suggests that material considerations cannot be extricated from questions of recognition, and thus suggests that the presence or absence of recognition and varying positions and views of my participants need to be examined in the context of the material conditions in which they variously live.

Recognition: Product or Process?

Anne Phillips (2003:264) criticises Fraser's analytical distinction between redistribution and recognition, by explaining that many struggles in the world of real politics are a messy combination of socio-economic and cultural struggles, rather than dividing neatly into one or the other, and thus it is very difficult to analyse the two categories separately. Iris Young (1997) also criticises the dichotomy Fraser creates between the economic and cultural spheres in favour of a more pluralistic conception of injustice. Young (1997:154) points out that issues dealing with recognition and identity (cultural issues) often have at their source material concerns, which does not make them purely economic issues either. Furthermore, using this dichotomous approach can distort or trivialize the real struggles that people are involved in. For example, claiming that struggles of those who are oppressed because of their sexuality are purely a cultural or identity issue may diminish the struggle of those groups for economic equality (Young,1997:157).

Furthermore, many scholars, including Phillips, have more recently redefined recognition struggles as struggles for citizen inclusion and political voice. This issue also brings attention to an important problem in both her and Taylor's theory. While importantly discussing the need to learn to live in a diverse society which is equal and just through the concept of recognition, those theories speak mostly about *achieving* 'recognition' as an end-state, without focusing enough on the process itself. Taylor and Fraser both speak about *having* recognition in a just society, and how to get there, without really exploring the complexities of the struggle itself. In South Africa particularly, one cannot speak of a specific 'end state' in the complex and uncertain processes of transformation we are currently experiencing. Phillips (2003:268) expresses a changing view among theorists, that rather than calling for public validation for their particular identities, people are often struggling to be recognised as a distinct group with a right to its own *voice* to express their own issues and concerns. What is then validated is not the particular collective identity, but the group's political agency (Phillips,2003:265). The struggle to eliminate external perceptions and find solutions to their injustices can thus only succeed with their full involvement – what Phillips perceives to be an extremely democratic vision. In the

context of my study, this becomes interesting in exploring whether 2Bop could be an example of people enacting their newly attained status as free citizens – such as using the clothing as a voice to begin eliminating harmful perceptions of coloured people, through their own political agency and in their own way.

James Tully (2000) too, does not deny that Fraser is correct in saying that various types of modern political struggle encompass both recognition and redistribution aspects. However, Tully (2000:472) argues that we should not be searching for the just and definitive theory of recognition that will lead to agreement once and for all between all citizens. He states that, “rather, the aim should be an account of democracy in which the freedom to question and challenge, as well as to reply to and defend, the prevailing norms of recognition, is taken as one enduring aspect of democratic activity among others” (Tully,2000:472). In South Africa, in many ways it is as if the transition to democracy has failed to provide citizens with a voice that is heard, as there is little visible change in the conditions of much of the population, and thus people have to find new ways to enact their citizenship and express a voice. 2Bop may be a channel through which people are able to feel like free citizens with a voice.

Tully (2000:474) explains a number of problems with finding a definitive agreement on recognition. One is that the struggle over recognition is always complex and unpredictable – it is almost never a simple relation between self and other; the demands affect the identities of members of the groups; and thus relations of cooperation change; and other demands are made in turn which also require acknowledgement and response. Other groups in society may defend the status quo, or may be willing to enter into negotiations over the demands, or present counter-demands of their own. South Africa, as a fledgling democracy, has a population that it is constantly in flux; the process of transformational justice involves the huge project of nation-building, in which identities, lives and demands cannot possibly be static or fixed. The politicised diversity and difference in South Africa necessarily means that there are a multiplicity of positions and views that intersect. Tully (2000:475) supports the democratisation of the struggles over recognition in and of themselves, because whatever the outcome, if all members of the

community have had a say in the reciprocal formulation of the solution, their mutual recognition has been accommodated. The very freedom to wear 2Bop may therefore be what is important because it allows people to have a say in the solutions to their own struggles.

Tully (2000:479) claims, therefore, that struggles are less about “recognition” than about what he calls “disclosure” and “acknowledgement.” By “disclosing” an injustice and displaying an alternative, and bringing about an “acknowledgement” and response from the other members of society (even if it is negative and not what was hoped for), members of an oppressed group or minority “generate a feeling of self-empowerment, self-worth and pride that can overcome the debilitating psychological and sociological effects of misrecognition” (Tully,2000:479). It is participation in these processes that helps to create a sense of belonging and identification with the larger political community – an identity as a citizen of a free and culturally diverse democracy is formed in being able to have a say over the rules of recognition (Tully,2000:480). In this way, some of the focus on the effects of the consumption of 2Bop is shifted from what 2Bop, as a brand that is shared between many different people, means in being worn, to the actual visceral experience of wearing the piece of clothing, and what this represents. It is about the participation in a democracy as a free citizen by voicing one’s view or claim through the act of wearing the clothing, and using it as a voice.

Similarly, Jocelyn Maclure (2003:6) states that the ways in which identities have pluralised in societies in late modernity indicates the problematic nature of speaking about a “we”. In diverse modern societies in flux, the politics of recognition, when conceived as struggles for *the* just and stable form of recognition, are doomed to fail. She argues that in the context of a society in which different citizens have different claims to recognition, “the participants must have a “political voice” which is *theirs* [the outcome of which is] a polyphonic discussion and negotiation where the participants both get to speak on their own terms and according to their own narratives *and* seek to make their claims intelligible in the language of other participants” (Maclure,2003:10). Maclure (2003) thus calls for a shift of focus from the end-state of recognition to the democratic

activity entrenched in the process of struggling for recognition. The ethical function of democracy would thus not be the design of a uniform “just” society – as one image of justice for some could be a source of domination for others – but rather the creation of a framework in which various citizens can “play the game of disclosure and acknowledgement with the least domination possible” (MacLure, 2003:15). This is applicable to a South African society in which people have different needs, which need to be expressed on their own terms, as was not permitted during apartheid.



Figure 5 Rolo and two friends, the one in the middle wearing a *Pac-Man* t-shirt. Taken by Rolo.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have laid out a framework, based largely on the theories of Taylor and Fraser, and important critiques thereof. In the first instance, Taylor’s pivotal liberal theory on the politics of recognition speaks about the dialogue created between individuals through their authentic collective identities, in order to achieve recognition of their worth in pursuing their conception of the good life. Fraser’s socialist response insists that the importance of recognition lies in transforming the underlying cultural and economic structures that impede parity of participation. Finally, there are theories that speak more about citizen agency and inclusion, and the struggles for recognition as more important than recognition as an end-state, as recognition cannot ever be truly achieved amongst constantly changing and competing demands.

There are aspects of each of these theories that stand out as issues that could be fruitful and suggestive for this case study. For one, the subject of identity remains something that is important to explore, because, as I will describe later, a big part of what is important to many of my participants in wearing 2Bop is that it is an authentic expression of their identities – who they are, their childhood experiences, where they come from. This is both in terms of Taylor as wanting to be recognized, for example, *as coloured*, as well as in terms of Tully et al in the actual act of expressing this *as a free citizen*, rather than the substance of what is expressed. Additionally, the importance of Fraser's emphasis on identity being situated in the context of material conditions was clear to me in the subtle as well as stark differences in the ways that my participants spoke about 2Bop and how this correlated with race and class.

3. METHODOLOGY

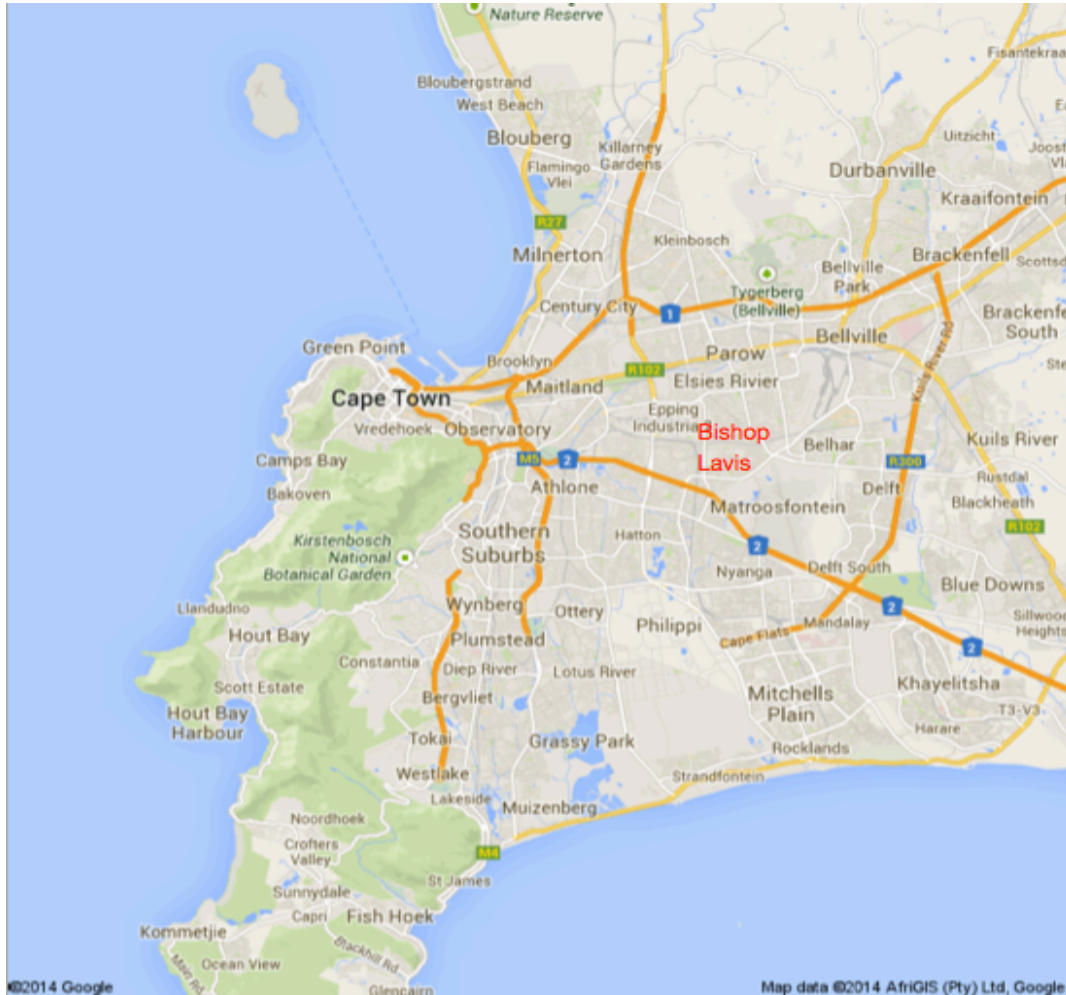


Figure 6 Current map of Cape Town, with the City Bowl centred on the label 'Cape Town' and the vast dunes of the Cape Flats spreading out to the east. Taken from Google Maps (2014).

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the perhaps unlikely or unexpected possibility that a fashion brand could have ethical and/or political effects on the way that people relate to themselves and each other. To that end, I needed to find a way to examine the ways in which 2 Bop wearers explained their affinity to the brand, and how it affected their senses of self and interactions with others. I have chosen 2Bop for this study

primarily because it has a particular social and political context and is consumed and worn by people across the divides in Cape Town. Thus I needed to conduct this research across those divides – geographical, racial, socio-economic, etc. Below I will describe the methods I used to collect my data, why I chose those methods, who I included, how I analysed my data, and the limitations and ethical concerns I faced in conducting this research.

Methods

I used three main methods in collecting data and researching my research topic:

1. Informal and semi-structured interviews with consumers of 2Bop, spanning racial, socio-economic and geographical divides.
2. Participant observation:
 - a. I spent a few days every week for approximately six weeks in Smith & Abrahams, the store owned by Brad and Anthony, speaking to and observing people who came into the store.
 - b. I attended parties and events in the City Bowl where I believed I would find people wearing 2Bop, as many people in my extended social circle wear 2Bop and attend those events.
3. Continuous reading of the relevant literature around the politics of recognition, consumption and fashion.

Altogether I interviewed 35 people, in varying degrees of depth. The venues for these interviews included their homes, public places such as parks, bars or restaurants, their places of business, 2Bop sales, and the Smith & Abrahams store. This included 16 coloured people, 12 white people, six black people and one Indian person. As I explained in my footnote in the introduction, I am using these apartheid classifications because of the relevance they bear on this study. However, there were participants who did not always use those terms to describe themselves. For example, Ilham, who is 30 and a journalist, often uses the word ‘brown’ instead of Indian, which she would otherwise be

classified as. As I will discuss in the next chapter, the word ‘coloured’ is particularly contentious, as it is a term created by the apartheid government and denotes a group which is felt by many to be somewhere in between black and white, one without its own self-defined identity. While most of my ‘coloured’ participants identified as such, there were one or two who would also be comfortable calling themselves ‘black’. Furthermore, Jitsvinger, a rapper and poet from Cape Town, identifies more with his Khoisan heritage and bloodline, than with the term ‘coloured’.

I explained in my introduction that my participants fell loosely into two categories: those in Bishop Lavis and those in Cape Town’s City Bowl area (and its immediate surrounding areas, such as Woodstock and Saltriver). It will, however, become an important point in this thesis that this dichotomy is not as strict as it seemed when I started my research, and that in fact there are people on both ends who traverse the spectrum between the Cape Flats and the City Bowl to varying degrees. In order to get as deep an understanding as possible of the ways that 2Bop may or may not connect people or affect the way they think or behave, I needed my interviews to encompass different people and areas. I must stress, however, that this is a very small sample, and is in no way representative of all consumers of 2Bop, nor of young people in Cape Town.

I interviewed young people of a variety of ages. Firstly people in their late 20s and early 30s, who grew up in the late eighties and early nineties, an extremely violent and politically volatile time in South Africa before the first democratic elections. And secondly, ‘born-frees’ (including myself) who grew up mainly after the advent of democracy. It is worth considering in this dissertation that the different ages of these participants may have affected the way that they grew up, the way that they see South Africa, and the way that they see themselves, which in turn is related to the effects of 2Bop on their identities and behaviour, which I will discuss further later in this thesis.

My choice of methods was influenced by the fact that my argument and conclusion would need to involve some analysis of social interaction. Therefore my methods needed to involve some participant observation. In addition, because my participants were so

diverse, my research was multi-sited and thus not suited to in-depth fieldwork. This led to the use of a combination of interviews and observation in different locations. These interviews were open-ended so as not to pre-empt overly the direction of conversation, and in so-doing enable the possibility for a deeper conversation that might reveal more about whom my participants were and what they thought and felt. Because this was such an open-ended research question, I hoped to be able to understand some of the nuances and complexities of the way my participants identified with themselves and each other, in relation to the brand 2Bop.

Introducing the City Bowl

My participants in the city bowl were diverse in race, though largely middle class. My research took place in the Smith & Abrahams store, people's homes, places of work, events (such as parties or sales) and at restaurants or coffee shops. I should first point out that my main participant was Alvin, my boyfriend, who is in his mid-thirties and coloured. He also accompanied me to many interviews and helped out in parts with my research. Alvin, formerly a corporate tax attorney, is now involved in the music scene in Cape Town, running a party on Long Street every Friday night called Uppercut, while doing ad hoc legal work and other odd jobs. It was Alvin who introduced me to Anthony, with whom he has been a friend for years, and it is he who sparked my interest in 2Bop. It was also within his broader social circles where I met a number of my participants. While his assistance, contributions and support were invaluable, and even made the research process more enjoyable at times; there were also a few negative consequences, mainly the danger that he would create a serious bias in my research, which I will discuss below in my limitations section.

Woodstock, where the Smith & Abrahams store is situated, is a trendy area just outside of the City Bowl, which has attracted some controversy as an area of gentrification, which has effectively pushed out many working class traders and residents who have been there for decades. Having only opened just over a year ago, it was hard to predict when it would be a busy day in the store and there were a number of days when no one came in

while I was there. I spent much of my time with Luke, the 23-year old white salesman who worked there at the time. The people who came in were fairly diverse: passers-by, (white) tourists, friends of Brad and Anthony, people doing business with the brand, and some followers of the brand who came in to see what was new. At a few events I met and spoke to some people wearing 2Bop. For example, at one event called Cold Turkey, an outdoor party that happens every second Sunday which features DJs, food and a bar, I had a long discussion with three members of a Namibian rap group called Black Vulcanite, who were all wearing 2Bop and were very passionate about the brand. Other people I spoke to at parties on Long Street, often at Uppercut. In addition, 2Bop occasionally hosts sales at a place called 'The Pit', which is a warehouse-type space next to a popular bar called Clarke's, alongside other streetwear brands and young skateboarders playing on the skate ramp in there, and beer for sale. I also interviewed two employees working at a streetwear shop called Shelflife in town which has customers from all over Cape Town and the world, which contrasted with the boutique feel and two pretty young white girls, who I felt would have looked out of place in Shelflife, amongst the baggie clothes, spray cans and big sneakers. Other interviews included Caitlin, who is white, in her mid-twenties, a waitress, who I interviewed in a café, also on Kloof Street. At UCT I interviewed Mohato and Motheo both black and in their mid-twenties. I had come into contact with Motheo one day when he ran up to me on the UCT campus and shouted "Will you marry me?" loudly because I was wearing 2Bop.

Among my more in-depth interviews were Dylan and Antoinette, a coloured couple in their late twenties who I interviewed in their flat in Woodstock, and who are both friends with Anthony. Dylan is a filmmaker who, among other things, made a renowned film called *Afrikaaps*, about the recasting of Afrikaans as a slave language, through the use of hip-hop (Smith, 2013). Antoinette is also involved in film and TV, recently a series called *I am Woman*, which tells the stories of women who have gone through difficult struggles in their lives (I am Woman). Neither of them grew up in the Cape Flats and as such had a somewhat different coloured upbringing in Cape Town. We shared a bottle of red wine, amidst their eclectic decoration, art and music. I also interviewed Roger (a writer and filmmaker) and Chloe (involved in the art and fashion scene), a white couple, in their flat,

which was in fact a block I used to live in in the centre of town – a safe and familiar environment. Jitsvinger, a Cape Town rapper and poet in his late twenties who worked on *Afrikaaps* with Dylan, met me at a coffee shop in a shopping centre in Pinelands, a very suburban and mostly white suburb.



Figure 7 Dylan. Taken from www.twobop.co.za



Figure 8 Chloe. Taken from www.twobop.co.za

Kent, who is coloured and in his early thirties, is a longboard maker and photographer, and has his own business called Alpha Longboards, hosted me at his workshop in Woodstock, where he continued to work on his latest longboard project while I interviewed him. His office at his workshop is as I would have imagined it, slightly

chaotic, full of pieces of his work. Kent is sponsored by 2Bop, as is Atang, who is black and in his late twenties, an artist, Adidas customizer and bicycle customizer (among other skills), in who's similarly busy and slightly messy studio I also interviewed him. His studio is in Saltriver, an area just past Woodstock and a bit more rundown. In Kent's studio, among other work of his, was a photo of Archbishop Desmond Tutu with a longboard Kent had made for him; while in Atang's studio sat various pieces of art, some comical, some more political. Kent grew up in various areas around the Cape Flats and at the time I first interviewed him still lived in Mitchell's Plain. Although he spends much of his time in the City Bowl, he maintains a strong connection with the Cape Flats. Atang spent much of his childhood in Bophuthatswana, a former homeland. Ilham, who is thirty, Indian ('brown') and a journalist, also lives in Woodstock, where I interviewed her. Her roots are in the Cape Flats, in Athlone. We sat in her courtyard and conversed over a cold drink. Along with Kent, Atang and others, she is also quite involved in the skating and street culture scene in Cape Town, while also being very politically aware and passionate.

Introducing Bishop Lavis

My main contact and participant in Bishop Lavis was Rolo Rozay (a name he created for himself), who I mentioned above in the introduction. Rolo is in his late twenties and is 2Bop's informal trader on the Cape Flats, particularly Bishop Lavis, although he works in a cellphone call centre during the day. Rolo brings stock in from Brad and Anthony, and communicates to his customers through various cellphone messaging services such as Whatsapp. He gets orders from people, usually on a first come, first served basis, and organizes a lay-bye arrangement for people who are not able to immediately pay for the item. At times there have been people bidding for popular items. On the various occasions when I met Rolo, Alvhin and I had to pick him up (with his two-year old daughter) in unfamiliar areas on the Cape Flats. On one occasion, we had to wait for him outside an ominous-looking blocks of flats, which was not the only time I felt a bit uncomfortable in Bishop Lavis and the areas surrounding it. There was an extreme contrast between the safe, familiar feel of the City Bowl, and the slightly poorer, slightly

dangerous-feeling Bishop Lavis where there has been a bad history of gang activity, and in which I felt the separation from the city. It emphasized the divisions between the City Bowl and the Cape Flats, and it also emphasized, for me, that I exist very much on the City Bowl side of the divide, and as I will discuss below in my limitations section, that this had implications for my own positionality in this study – as I was effectively a participant in my own research.



Figure 9 Rolo.

My research and interviews in Bishop Lavis consisted of Rolo taking us around to different places to meet different people. Far from the cars and the city noises, Bishop Lavis was clearly a very community-oriented area, with children playing soccer in the streets, and people going about their domestic routines. This is also a reminder that many of the people I interviewed in the City Bowl have their workplaces in close proximity to their homes, while many people in Bishop Lavis have to travel a long a way into the city for work. Another key informant in Bishop Lavis was Aulrich, who is in his mid-twenties. He is unemployed but told me that he sends applications for jobs to the

government, which takes months to get back to him. One interview took place at his cousin's house in the middle of the day on a weekday, which was a small sitting room with a basket full of laundry on the couch, and the sound of the TV in another room. There were four guys working on a car in the driveway, and a dog chained to a tree. On another occasion we went to Aulrich's own house. His mother was in the kitchen cooking, and his father came in from work, in a smart suit with a briefcase, pausing to make sure we had been offered drinks. We stopped at a few other houses, on our way to a meeting in a big park near the railway lines, where we met up with several guys in their early and mid-twenties, who were hanging out with a few girls who were very quiet. We chatted on the edge of the park, next to a wall covered in graffiti. They had gotten the message that Rolo sent them wrong, and were dressed for a photo shoot, not an interview.



Figure 10 Aulrich.



Figure 11 Three of my participants in Bishop Lavis.

Analysis

Payne and Payne (2004:34) explain that, “Qualitative methods of research... assume that sociological understanding should be based on the meanings that social actors bring to particular social interactions. Understandings and theories grow ‘inductively’ out of what is studied.” My data collection process was interactive with my participants and intersubjective, and I continually went back to our interactions to understand what themes were emerging, what my participants were really saying in our conversations, and thus what findings were embedded in my data. I also continually went back to the theories of the Politics of Recognition to make sure that I understood the literature properly, so that I may be able to conclude by taking the literature and applying it to my data findings, producing an answer to my research question.

Limitations and Challenges

Payne and Payne (2004:194) point out that “research is a messy, complicated business, full of inter-personal problems and anxieties often unhinted at by the clean and tidy world

of textbooks.” During the course of my research, I encountered a number of obstacles, both practical and personal, which informed and transformed the questions I was asking and the answers I found.

Gupta and Ferguson (1997:22) describe one traditional criterion of what is considered to be “good” fieldwork as the researching of the “other.” By conventional rules fieldwork consists of the researcher going into the “field” as an outsider, rather than an insider. This was not a clear cut process for me. In some situations I was an insider – with my friends, at the places and events I hang out at, as a wearer of 2Bop, as the same race and with the same socio-economic backgrounds as some of my participants. In other situations, I was often somewhat of an outsider, with people I did not know, in places that were very foreign to me, as a different race, speaking a different language and with a different socio-economic background than some of my participants. On the other hand, with a coloured boyfriend from the Cape Flats, some of this social distance was reduced, but not completely eradicated, as I was still white and middle class in a coloured working class area where colouredness powerfully informed peoples’ senses of self and association. I thus faced complex subjective problems. A most potent problem was that almost all of the people in the city that I interviewed were introduced to me by Alvin over the last two years or so. When he first told me about 2Bop two years ago, I was immediately interested in looking at it from an academic point of view. However, this presented a dilemma as this meant that the research started off already very close to me and very much a part of my life. At many points during the research process I became aware of the kinds of questions I was asking and what my thought processes were, and I was forced to ask myself how much my intimate relationship with Alvin was affecting my research process and how this could affect my findings. For example, I realized that many of the issues I was exploring applied to him, such as coloured identity, coming from the Cape Flats (which he does, from Athlone, where his parents still live), the disconnect between the Cape Flats and the City Bowl (where he lives) and the pervasive racialised issues in Cape Town.



Figure 12 Alvhin.

As Payne and Payne (2004:193) state, “Actively self-aware researchers not only produce more convincing research, but may also begin to question the very basis on which they started.” Many of the issues implicated me – issues which I was struggling with myself, categories that I fit into, which made me a participant in my own process. I am a consumer and wearer of 2Bop, in my mid-twenties, white, South African, and living in Cape Town – all the most central issues that I explored in my research. This necessarily meant that I too am struggling with post-apartheid racial issues and am dealing with the divided geography of Cape Town. My observation is that my race, background and language were indeed present and relevant in many of my interactions. I made reference to my race, and my participants made reference to their race in relationship to mine. In Bishop Lavis, some of the boys I was talking to spoke freely to Alvhin in Afrikaans and used slang terms that I was not familiar with. Often when I asked what they were saying the response was along the lines of, “you can ask Alvhin later,” or “don’t worry about it.” There was laughing and big exclamations, and I often felt quite excluded – both by the coloured Cape Flats camaraderie and the English/Afrikaans barrier. Often even Alvhin was participating fully in the conversations and not actually translating for me. However, I do not believe this presented any major obstacles to my research, but they were important factors that I had to think hard about and be alerted to.

Ethical Concerns

The American Sociological Association's Code of Ethics (1999) specify a number of key ethical considerations to be taken into account when conducting research which people. Among them are, most importantly, the requirement that the research brings no harm to the participants; that their confidentiality is protected, which may include using a pseudonym instead of a real name; and that the researcher has the full informed consent of the participant when retrieving and using information through interactions with them, which may involve drawing up and signing an informed consent agreement.

Piper and Simons (2005:56) explain, "Ethical decisions are the results of a weighing up of a myriad of factors in the specific complex social and political situations in which we conduct research." I had both personal ethical considerations, as well as important scholarly ethical guidelines to abide by. My subjective perspective discussed above presented an ethical problem, as the parts in which I was more of an insider may have influenced the outcomes of my research - I may have been more hesitant to be critical of those I considered my friends as I was hesitant to upset or offend them, which might have distorted my findings. Furthermore, because I am friends with Anthony and Brad and support the brand myself, I may have been too close to see more problematic aspects, or reluctant to say anything bad about them. I must stress, however, that I remained extremely aware of these risks throughout the research and writing process, and have tried my utmost to avoid these problems.

I did also ensure that I followed strict academic guidelines with regard to carrying out my interviews. At all stages and with all my participants, I ensured that I had informed consent to use the content of the interviews. Piper and Simons (2005:56) explain that informed consent "means that those interviewed or observed should give their permission in full knowledge of the research and the consequences for them of not taking part." At the same time, I made sure they understood that if they said anything they did not want to be published, I would make sure that it was left out, and that they would be able to pull

out at any stage if they so desired. I maintained a policy of confidentiality, by which my participants were able to speak to me in confidence, as well as refuse the publication of any information they believed might harm them (Piper and Simons,2005:57). I obtained permission from all of my participants to use their real names in my thesis, and where needed – as with Jitsvinger – I drew up an actual informed consent form so that we had a written agreement about how the research would be used.

4. NOSTALGIA: WAYS OF REMEMBERING THE PAINS AND PLEASURES OF 'ORDINARY' SOUTH AFRICAN CHILDHOODS



Figure 13 Vest with zombie motif from a game called Ghosts and Ghouls. Taken from www.smithandabrahams.co.za

Introduction

“2BOP is not just about nostalgia. This friend of mine came up with this term: *Future nostalgia* [which happens to now be a popular vinyl record listening party that happens every week at a local jazz club] – it’s almost like getting déjà vu in the moment and you’re like – ‘WOW! I’m going to remember this moment forever.’ So, we’re trying to create that kind of feeling where even though you’re inspired by some past era – we’d rather reinterpret it in terms of what’s happening now, and what’s going to be happening in the future. In those terms it is a futuristic style.” – Anthony, quoted on a local blog called ‘Under the Culture’ (<http://undertheculture.wordpress.com/2012/09/09/under-the-culture-speaks-to-2bop/>)

In this chapter I will explore the personal importance of 2Bop for my participants through the lens of a common theme that came out in my data – nostalgia. My aim in doing this research was to find out what it is about the brand that attracts the diverse range of 2Bop consumers, and more importantly, whether this is an indication of something bigger, i.e. whether consuming the brand has a political or ethical effect on the ways that people

relate to one another. In this chapter, I will firstly detail the background of Cape Town's segregation, setting the scene for the racial influences on the nostalgia that 2Bop invokes, as well as a discussion about what nostalgia in a post-apartheid context might mean. Second I will look at the different dimensions of this nostalgia, which included both nostalgia for the worlds of the games themselves, as well as for the experiences of playing them. Third, I will explore the ways in which these experiences, particularly among my coloured participants, are politicised by the environments they took place in – the ways that nostalgia involved both pleasure and danger on the Cape Flats. For my participants, the nostalgia for 'ordinary' happy childhood memories are deeply rooted in present anxieties, and within this I hope to show that a brand like 2Bop can be connected to the sense of self that young people are developing in post-apartheid Cape Town.

Fragmented Cape Town, Fragmented Memories

In Cape Town, the separation between people of different races was, and remains, particularly stark, both socially and geographically. The Group Areas Act was passed in 1950 in order to prevent racially mixed residential zones in urban areas (Western,1996:70). Then Minister of the Interior, T.E. Donges is quoted as saying, "We believe that this bill will be one of the cornerstones for preserving a white South Africa" (Western,1996:70). Over three decades, 150 000 Capetonians were forcibly removed from their homes and placed in planned settlements, as was happening throughout the country. Western (1996:73) suggests that, particularly in Cape Town, the act was more directly aimed at coloureds, those in the "middle", rather than blacks, as it was they who posed the biggest threat to interracial mixing. As I have mentioned previously, the term 'coloured' itself is contested and controversial: it was defined by the apartheid government, on their own terms, as both non-white and non-black African, and is thus ultimately not much of a definition at all (Western,1996:9). In fact, even legislatively, there was confusion throughout apartheid about the definition of 'coloured' (Goldin,1987:xxvi). Although their roots are difficult to trace, essentially these are the people who are the result of the mixing of the Khoisan peoples, white settlers from 1652 onwards, and their slaves largely from Madagascar and the East Indies

(Western,1996:12). Despite there being many grey areas in practice, racial categories such as this were strictly enforced by the apartheid system of classification. Many coloured people reject the use of the term, choosing rather to refer to themselves as ‘so-called coloured’, black, or even Khoisan.

Alongside the Group Areas Act was the 1959 Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act, which set in motion what some call “grand apartheid”, partitioning blacks into “independent” homelands according to these government-defined ethnic categories (Louw,2004:64). The government positioned themselves in a neo-colonial relationship with the homelands, and South African civil and political rights were removed from black people, ostensibly because they were given their own rights in their own homelands. These policies, along with the acts and laws that accompanied them, carved up the country’s population and scarred it, as the divisions are still socially and physically visible.

Western (1996:3) explains that The Group Areas Act was the first time that coloured people officially had their property rights taken away from them and that the Act completely transformed the city and its citizens. Geographically speaking, the act was designed in Cape Town in such a way that white settlement would occupy the higher ground, for the purposes of “defence, domination and amenity” (Western,1996:99). This included the flanks of Table Mountain, which included the city centre and surrounding suburbs, and including numerous western Atlantic Seaboard suburbs, southern suburbs, and northern suburbs. The whole of Table Mountain was zoned as a white area, despite being largely uninhabitable. Coloureds and blacks were relegated to the Cape Flats, spoken of as the dumping ground of apartheid. Rail lines and arterial roads were positioned as buffer zones, and as a means of moving non-white workers to their jobs with minimal crossing of respective zones. Overall, this meant that people of different races in Cape Town were divided by quite large distances and boundaries; and post-apartheid, this crafted racial geography of the city remains largely unchanged.

Black Africans were pushed as far away from the whites as possible, to the townships and informal settlements beyond the industrial centre of the city such as Langa, Nyanga and Gugulethu. Coloured zones flanked and concealed them on the sand dunes of the Cape Flats, correlating spatial position with social distance (Western,1996:101). Journeying out of Cape Town takes one from fairly large middle class areas of the Cape Flats such as Athlone, to progressively poorer areas. In the 1950s major housing shortages led the apartheid government to extend the Cape Flats and in the 1960s areas such as Bonteheuwel and Manenberg were planned (Jeppie,2004:12). Among the effects of the Group Areas Act was a “shattering of long-established kinship and neighbourhood networks, together with the social and economic supports that these provided. Such dislocations had the effect, in the new locations, of augmenting fear, isolation, marginalisation, substance abuse, and gang activity, as strangers became thrown together in new hostile environments, distant from each other and the city” (Saucier,2011:131). The result of the processes and changes in the enforcement of the Group Areas Act thus did not only strictly divide people racially, but also produced entrenched class stratifications in the Cape Flats, where the working class and poorer areas of Manenberg, Bonteheuwel, Hanover Park, Lavender Hill and others still remain the most closely linked to serious problems of gang violence on the Cape Flats. Coloured narratives of the past necessarily connect to strong communal memories of forced removals into designated coloured areas, as it transformed the lives of so many people, determining the spaces in which they had to make home, and the material conditions in those spaces.

In his seminal paper “Walking in the City,” de Certeau (2007) speaks about the urban text that the “walkers” of the city write. He argues that the spatial practices of the walkers structure the conditions of social life; that the spatial order may present a variety of possibilities, and the walker of the city makes these exist, emerge and invents new ones (de Certeau,2007:254). Spaces and places are thus created by the people moving in the city, and it is memories that eventually tie us to those places. Memories are what give the neighbourhood its character, and according to de Certeau (2007:258), no place is not haunted by the spirits of what was there and is now gone, and it is these haunted places that are the only ones people can live in. Thus the history of space in Cape Town is an

important consideration in examining the sense of self and how it relates to practice among my informants and their relation to other people across and within the divides. The ways that people related to one another in Cape Town was partly space contingent, and the end of apartheid was the first time that people were really faced with the opportunities of creating new paths and stories themselves. These entrenched historical divisions thus present hurdles in the attempts to create transformation when these are the places that people have found habitable for so long and which are connected to their consciousness. In many ways, young people are freer and more mobile, but in other ways ‘home’ remains largely racial, and so too does the brand move between racial spaces and identities associated with them.

2Bop creates a sense of nostalgia for almost all of my participants; a nostalgia for those spaces they grew up in, many in the Cape Flats – many in the spaces they were assigned and the homes they made out of them. As I will discuss below, this is a nostalgia for the memories of ‘ordinary’ childhoods. While those spaces and experiences may have been partly shaped or moulded by the architecture of apartheid, these childhood memories are also ones of joy, satisfaction, warmth, excitement. These are memories of playing video games and diving into a world where anyone can be a superhero no matter where they come from, and memories of the places in which those games were played, including the people, the language, the sights and smells. I contend that 2Bop – with its representations of those games and references to those childhoods, releases a repertoire of memories, and by adorning this on their bodies 2Bop allows these participants to access a self from their past or their roots, and bring it into the creation and expression of a new sense of self in a South African society and landscape in flux.

Dimensions of Nostalgia

In his book, *Native Nostalgia*, Jacob Dlamini (2009:15) gives an explanation of the roots and meaning of the word ‘nostalgia’, conventionally understood as a “longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed.” The term was first coined by the Swiss Doctor Johannes Hofer in 1688 using two Greek roots: *nostos* (return home) and *algia* (longing)

(Dlamini,2009:15). Dlamini (2009:16) says that today nostalgia is a “sentiment of loss and displacement,” which is an incurable condition of modernity, and which is ironically more about the present than the past – “present anxieties refracted through the prism of the past.” In a South Africa struggling to come to terms with the legacy of apartheid and the challenges of widespread poverty, extreme inequality, and a government that has failed to deliver on its promises, nostalgia becomes a “longing for continuity in a fragmented world” (Dlamini,2009:16). Dlamini (2009:17) cites Svetlana Boym who discusses two types of nostalgia: restorative – attempting to rebuild a home that was lost and reclaim lost memories; and reflective – focusing on the longing and loss, the uneven memories and process of remembrance. According to Boym (Dlamini, 2009: 18), “reflective nostalgia cherishes shattered fragments of memory and temporalizes space.” This is the kind of feeling of nostalgia that came out of my interactions with my participants: a longing and affection for memories of childhood, of the space inhabited as a child, of the world of video games, which is embodied in the items of 2Bop clothing and the performance of wearing them.

This is, in fact, also how the brand is packaged and marketed, as it is based on memories and experiences of Brand and Anthony themselves. As I mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, ‘future nostalgia’ is how the philosophy is described on the Smith & Abrahams website – a philosophy that references the pasts, presents, and futures of their customers. Anthony literally says they want to ‘create’ the feeling of nostalgia through the brand – 2Bop should be current, relevant, cool, but imbued with the meanings and feelings related to those cherished memories, and creating the same kind of memories for the future. Recreating those feelings means the possibility of performing the power of those memories by putting on a cap or pulling on a sweatshirt. Anthony also described to me their idea that 2Bop is like an imaginary friend: “When I started the brand I wasn’t inspired by what I found in stores. 2Bop is like an imaginary friend that comes along and gives you exactly what you wanted. It is something that you wish existed” (Interview,29/5/2013).

Anthony and Brad, and many of my participants, told me about how the brand represents who they (Anthony and Brad) are, and simply what they would want to wear. In a way, Anthony and Brad are their challengers in *Street Fighter* or *Pac-man*⁴, offering them a game for a 2Bop – or for the price of a t-shirt or sweatshirt. They, in a sense, are those ‘imaginary friends’ they speak of, and the consumer looks at them and the brand, and sees a way into their childhood. KingAdz, an author and ‘youth culture expert’, explained that the hook in 2Bop is that it represents its creators, but “the brand is like a mirror which has to reflect back what the consumer wants, so that an ad may look like just an ad, but you see a part of you.” (Interview,30/4/2013). 2Bop thus literally provides a costume into which one can step, in order to access the imagination of the child one once was and perform as the character in a game, a creature with a weapon and with special powers to challenge what they see. There is an element of fantasy to the descriptions and philosophy of the brand, a desire to recreate an imaginary world in present day real life. An important element of nostalgia is about real memories of being around the corner store and playing with friends, and the spaces and sounds of childhood, but I suggest that there is also a nostalgia for a fantasy, a world in one’s imagination – the worlds of the video games themselves.

Despite the polarisation of race and class among many of my participants, the experience of playing video games is a happy one, of an ‘ordinary’ childhood. The games themselves were worlds in which where you came from, how much money you had, and what colour your skin was, were irrelevant once you entered the game with your 2Bop. Atang, much of whose art is quite fantastical itself said, “2Bop is familiar... the video games were my friend” (Interview,5/3/2013) Many of my participants made references to the games they loved. “There is a long sleeve top with a naked lady from a game. A guy came up and asked, “Isn’t that the lady from the game?” When you finish a [certain] stage the naked lady comes up and her clothes come off,” said Aulrich (Interview,16/3/2013). Rolo added, “I still play that game at work. Even if you haven’t played that game in ages, even

⁴ Two examples of video games featured on 2Bop clothing. *Street Fighter* puts the player in the character of a martial arts fighter, while in *Pac-Man* the player controls the character around mazes, trying to eat pellets, and escape enemies. Other examples used by 2Bop are *Wonder Boy*, *Tiger Heli*, and *Gals Panic*.

Brad says now, it's the best one [game] to choose. Everyone used to try get to that level, it was something special" (Interview,16/3/2013). Dylan particularly remembered playing a game called *Double Dragon* at his friend's house. "Those were some of the best times of my life. There was an innocence, a shared excitement. You have to imagine being the character" (Interview,20/3/2013).



Figure 14 Graphic from a video game called *Gals Panic*. Taken from twobop.tumblr.com

Jitsvinger emphasised the world that 2Bop recreates. He pointed out the importance of the very word '2Bop': "The word 2Bop and a graffiti or a motif [on the clothes] comes from the games that we used to play, and that sparks a point in all our lives, or most of our lives on the Cape Flats... 2Bop is the one word that, its more than money. 2Bop is actually access to another world. So they transport you into that..."

"If you look at the system being a machine, with various arcane characters, then you have the same system everywhere. The guy on top, the guy at the bottom... So for you to move between them, you either gonna fall in, like a conveyor belt, doing a mundane thing, whatever it is, sometimes you're not even aware. But with 2Bop, it's like you play the game, you've got this token... Where you could challenge. It was an arena where you could challenge a guy that's 10

years older than you in a game with the same rules that apply. So, and today you can still put your mental gloves on and challenge the old regime.” (Interview,4/4/2013)

In his poetic, often slightly obscure way, Jitsvinger spoke about video games being an escape from the mundane or oppression of everyday life, in work, and in social life. Video games were the great leveller, where age, race, background, status became irrelevant in favour of how good you were at the game, how well you played your character. My participants’ memories suggested that wearing 2Bop allows the wearer to go back into those worlds, the chance to perform those characters again. In this way nostalgia does in fact become a ‘future nostalgia’ in that these fantastical worlds can still be accessed, and 2Bop itself thus becomes the leveller, which allows one into those memories and games.

Therefore there was also a feeling of the world being something that was shared, in which one faced the same challenges, and occupied the same virtual spaces. Some participants placed importance on this experience being generational (despite the fact that the ages of my participants varied). Mohato, who is in his mid-twenties, said,

“2Bop is really affirming for a generation. I was thinking about this earlier that there are a lot of people now that for the first time are old enough to be nostalgic. So we’ve grown up listening to people saying how awesome the eighties were and how awesome the seventies were and how we’re too young to know about this, too young to know about that. And now for the first time we’ve got things from our generation that we can say were awesome that other people don’t know about, so that whole video game culture is one... And so a lot of things that did happen, it wasn’t just me, if you know what I mean, spazzing out at video games. It’s like quite affirming yea, it’s like, you’re not alone, in a sort of how you grew up and the things you did.” (Interview,16/5/2013)

Ironically, Anthony and Brad, and many of their customers who are their friends, are older than Mohato, and did grow up in the eighties, yet they also feel this nostalgia for something that they shared with other people, for their time as a child, something that is theirs, that is affirming. The worlds of those games were another dimension where there was no sense of age or time, and the consumers could inhabit the same world in different generations and still feel like it is “theirs”. It also means that the brand is able to market

itself to a wide range of people, and that people of all ages and backgrounds will buy into their own childhood fantasies.

Growing up as ‘born-frees’ in a middle class multiracial context, Motheo and Mohato have also had specifically post-apartheid childhoods. Yet, while he was black, Motheo’s experience differed from my other ‘born-free’ participants in Bishop Lavis such as Aulrich who grew up in a poorer, entirely coloured context with the threat of violence more imminent. Nevertheless, both Motheo and Aulrich have happy childhood memories of playing video games – post-apartheid. Motheo said,

“My parents were the first generation to move out of the townships into the cities... I grew up in the suburbs but we always spent our holidays in the townships... Maybe the culture I grew up in is not the same, but the shop is also where we would hang out as kids. We would flip over crates and hang out there, playing *Pac-man* and *Street Fighter*. The arcades were also a focal point. There was the Magic Company in Sandton City [a shopping mall in a wealthy area of Johannesburg], which doesn’t really exist anymore. The Sandton kids and the Alex [township] kids would all come in to play the same games.” (Interview, 20/2/2013)

Basically, video games represented happy and normal childhood memories for participants of different races, ages and classes, and for many of my coloured participants in Bishop Lavis, happy memories of playing games were as much memories of an ‘ordinary’ childhood as for other participants. While I will go into more detail later about the issues that came up specifically around coloured identities, in this respect my data showed a significant absence of discussion around experiences of violence and protests in response to my questions about the past; the nostalgia that my informants spoke of did not involve memories of a violent or unstable time involving the horrors of apartheid, but normal happy childhood memories. In fact, this surprised me. To my mind if one grew up in an area that was a site of some of the worst apartheid brutality and its effects, this must have meant that one’s childhood was completely over-shadowed by this, that it would be impossible to remember those times fondly.



Figure 15 "Shoot/play games" T-shirt and "You lose" cap. Taken from www.twobop.co.za

One way to understand this is through the work of Jacob Dlamini (2009), who expressed something I saw and experienced: that ordinary South Africans also have ‘ordinary’ understandings of their past, and that actually South Africans are not agreed on the meaning of their pasts. Dlamini (2009) asks the controversial question about what it means to remember a childhood under apartheid with fondness. My data demonstrated that it is possible to remember a childhood in Bishop Lavis as a normal happy childhood. Black and coloured South Africans did not suffer and struggle in the same way against apartheid, they were not passive receivers of their oppression and thus also had the same varieties and assortments of experiences in their lives as any other community.

Dlamini (2009) reminds us that while every family had its struggles, childhood was still a simpler time, as it was for other children. This resonates with many of my respondents. Kent told me, “As a child I was just trying to find the latest BMX” (Interview, 5/4/2013). Even childhood fears were not about apartheid. Rolo laughed when he told me, “The biggest fear I had as a child was the station strangler, he was like the bogeyman”⁵ (Interview, 1/6/2013). This is not to say that my informants had no awareness of apartheid at all. They did, and this is important to note as it illustrates Dlamini’s assertion that different people experienced apartheid in different ways. Kent said, “I had a family

⁵ The ‘Station Strangler’ was a serial rapist and killer during the early nineties who would lure children away from railway stations and murder them after sodomising them (Roelf, 2005).

member who tried to blow up a police station, my uncle was shot in the leg, my dad was involved in protests. There were times when I was held back from school” (Interview,5/4/2013). On the other hand, experiences of violence were also partly determined by age, race, and where one grew up. Atang grew up in the homeland of Bophuthatswana, which he described as “detached from the rest of South Africa. It was a cocoon, it was protected” (Interview,27/5/2013). Alvin “was sent away from Athlone for a while to go to school in Bredasdorp in the mid-eighties at the time of the ‘Trojan Horse’ incident” (Personal Communication,2/2/2013).

Communities of memory

Dlamini (2009:18) stresses that present anxieties reflected in the attachment to cherished memories are related to what he feels is a distorted narrative around black dispossession in South Africa, which casts all black people as having experienced apartheid the same way, disguising the complexity and unevenness of black (as distinct from coloured) lives under apartheid. My data indicates that the ways that people experience themselves and their clothing is often related to the ways in which they have experienced post-apartheid South Africa. While racial divides remain salient, people of different races have experienced change to varying degrees in their lives. Coloured people have not all simply stayed in the same oppressed state they were during apartheid, and many have been a part of transformation in certain uneven ways. Further, Dlamini (2009:20) is concerned with what he calls the “anti-politics machine” that the ANC has created, which again treats black (and coloured) people as having suffered in the same way, and in doing so treats them all in the same way as objects towards which state policies are routinely directed, and as “passive recipients of state-led service delivery.” These are policies and practice that are superficial and do not address the deeper, real issues of local communities.

The complexities of experiences during and after apartheid came out in my interviews about the nostalgia that 2Bop inspires, most particularly among my coloured participants. Many of my interviews with my coloured participants in and from the Cape Flats revealed that the nostalgia embodied in the clothes often had to do not just with happy or

safe memories, but also a navigation of the harsher or more complicated levels of a childhood on the Cape Flats. In fact, while many of my participants felt that the brand portrayed a positive image of being coloured and Cape Flats culture, this was not always incongruent with a portrayal of a reality that involved violence and deprivation. The sense of community, corner store culture, and language were all very important, but also often imbued with a sense of danger or roughness. Different participants positioned themselves in different ways in relation to the branded image, which often involved positioning themselves through a measure of relative privilege and how this affected their experience. Roger was considering his experience in comparison to the branded corner store experience:

“I also wonder about, because my experience, I don’t have a corner store kind of cultural experience. I grew up in Durban. And there were two corner stores and both had video games. One was quite far and one was quite close but the one that was quite far was the one that we stopped in after school and sometimes we’d walk up there as well... And they had *Donkey Kong* there and there were all these Indian boys that used to play *Donkey Kong*, and they always used to beat me and I convinced my mother to buy me an Atari with *Donkey Kong* on it so I could practice at home, so I could beat them... And I eventually beat them and I won. I became the *Donkey Kong* king because I could practice at home, because I was lucky enough to... and I wonder if that experience of video games not being tied to, for me, having two spaces – the home space and the corner store space, means that the corner store culture stuff isn’t that special to me.”
(Interview, 9/4/2013)

Real experiences of space became very salient, expressing the more political dimensions of childhoods in Cape Town. The divisions in experiences of childhood in Cape Town revealed themselves not just in terms of race, but class too. Dylan, for example, is coloured but did not grow up on the Cape Flats or speaking Kaapse Afrikaans, and is more middle class than my participants in Bishop Lavis. He felt 2Bop gave him access to a certain coloured experience, in some sense, a more ‘raw’ experience of being a coloured child playing in the streets of the Cape Flats than in the comfort of the home he grew up in.

“I grew up in Kuilsriver which was not the same as the [Cape] Flats. I was only made aware of being coloured when I was at a ‘Model C’ school [Schools previously reserved for white learners under apartheid]. Then we lived in the northern suburbs where I was the only coloured in my class, and I became aware of being different... I missed out on a certain coloured experience. Now I can wear 2Bop clothes with coloured phrases that display a relation to a coloured sensibility...”
(Interview,20/3/2013)

Similarly, Antoinette had a different upbringing to the corner store culture evoked in 2Bop clothing. Although wary of essentialising coloured ‘culture’, she said,

“I grew up in a house on a field on the premises of a bible school where my dad worked in Milnerton. There were no corner stores or neighbourhood. I played video games with my brother until they broke... I had a particular coloured experience, but I missed out on another coloured experience. What is a ‘coloured’ experience? One night I went out in the dark, playing with my friends, hiding, running. I had a feeling of, “this is what other coloured kids get to do all the time.”
(Interview,20/3/2013)

Both Dylan and Antoinette are in their late twenties, yet the places they grew up in, including growing up in middle class homes, affected how they identified as coloured. Dylan pointed out that although as a coloured person, one may “feel left out if you don’t know the slang... there is a stigma of the Cape Flats dialect unless you come from there. The context can change everything.” (Interview,20/3/2013)

My participants in Bishop Lavis expressed a childhood reality that was not all sweetness and light. The experiences of these participants do indeed centre very much on community, language, the corner store, etc. However, they also displayed a reality in which lives were often navigated around harsher realities of the Cape Flats. Indeed, the corner shop was and is for many children a place where one would spend one’s free time, the social hub of the neighbourhood, which is significant given the strong sense of community attached to coming from the Cape Flats and Bishop Lavis. I was given numerous descriptions of the importance of the corner store in childhood memories. Brad originally told me that he “has nostalgic memories about looking at dudes in the game shop, the characters like the skollies [thugs] and the shopkeepers. We weren’t looking at

girls.” (Interview,8/8/2012). The description of his mother was repeated in other examples; a description of concern for who her child would turn out to be: “If you hang around with skollies, people are going to think you’re a skollie.” Ordinary childhoods also included being surrounded by characters that were not altogether ‘happy’ characters, yet were part of ‘happy’ memories. Jitsvinger described the experience of the game shop or the corner store:

“As soon as you step into the game shop you choose your weapon... you will see a line forming, and everyone will start chilling, and the line gets longer and then people will start thinking, “I could be better than you at that,” and then after that the conversation moves to other things, so it was a good mediator. Actually, now that you talk about it, the corner shop, if you imagine going for therapy, you got lots of stress – the abuse, the crime, the whatnot, you know. So now you have truants, the guys who bunk school, because the education system challenges your intelligence, even insults it to a large degree. So the corner shop with the games in there would be your supplier, your dope man, your mental stimulus, and your social worker.” (Interview,4/4/2013)

His version of nostalgia was also of the video games at the corner store being a positive memory and a central part of the community, something encouraging for the children playing them. Nevertheless, his picture of nostalgia was also laced with the danger and fear that was a reality of life on the Cape Flats. The games were a way to relieve the stress and the vulnerability of that reality by temporarily leaving and becoming someone or something else. This further applied not only to dangers such as gang violence, but also for other non-violent but oppressive aspects of apartheid that were so much a part of being a coloured child - such as education. Without giving too much credit to children who bunked school, the dispossession that Dlamini speaks of was also dispossession of a proper education, which affected different people in different ways, and which as a result likely affected their experiences of post-apartheid transformation too. However, both the peacefulness and dispossession of children on the Cape Flats, specifically Bishop Lavis, is brought together in owning and wearing 2Bop.



Figure 16 "Skollie" (thug) beanie.

In my research I observed that it was not only actual corner stores where games were played but also game shops, which were also a feature particular to the Cape Flats and prevalent in Bishop Lavis. At one point while picking up and meeting people with Rolo, we stopped at a game shop, set up in a resident's garage, as a substitute for the bigger arcades in malls. This shop was filled with children and teenagers huddled around the games. Aulrich said, "I still play games every day because I'm not working. I wait on the corner at the games shop for the schools to come out. I complained to the shop owner that the games are getting boring, they must bring back the games that we used to play when I was younger" (Interview, 1/6/2013). This is not a particularly glamorous picture of the game shops, and indicates a kind of endless waiting. Aulrich is younger than Rolo, as are the other guys I spoke to in Bishop Lavis. In fact, none of them would even have played with a '2Bop' – while many of the games have stayed the same, one of them told me, "when we started playing games it was a 50c (5Bop) already... we most definitely [recognise the same characters], because it's the same games, the price just went up". He also said, however, that "the game shops are all closed because people get shot in the game shops and drugs and stuff. So we are forced to go to malls. People would break into the game shops. It doesn't make a profit, actually a loss" (Interview, 16/3/2013). Although there are actually still game shops and corner stores with games, it is indicative of a

bigger problem I will describe below of the limits that remain in place that apply to many facets of daily life, imposed by the gangs and violence in the area. Kent's memories also differed, affected by a few factors:

"As a kid I was always hanging around games. I could never play them – I grew up poor so there was no money for games. My friends were all good at *Double Dragon* and *Street Fighter*, I was always three rows back trying to see what was happening. That was a big part of my childhood memories... My parents got divorced when I was five, so I moved around a lot – Atlantis, Mitchell's Plain, Hanover Park, etc. The most settling time in my life was when I lived at my Aunt's place in Mitchell's Plain. I knew where I was sleeping, went to school, etc. I had a group of friends and did normal child stuff – went to the arcade, had a bike. When I lived in Senator Park with my dad in Std. 5, in '92/'93, downstairs there was a Laundromat that was now a big arcade. It was called 'Around the World' and it was all I ever did. It was the first time ever that I clocked *Street Fighter* with Bunker [a character]." (Interview, 5/4/2013)

The guys we met in the park in Bishop Lavis also illustrated that within the Cape Flats itself there are different experiences, different identities. The Cape Flats "experience" is not one thing. At one point there was a discussion with Alvhin about where he comes from.

Guy 1: "Are you perhaps from the ghetto?"

Alvhin: "I mean I'm from Athlone, it's not like ghetto ghetto."

Guy 1: "But Athlone is ghetto too hey."

Alvhin: "Well I live maybe two blocks from Bokmakierie, we used to play football together. So I mean I know what ghetto is."

Rolo: "You've probably never been to Bokmakierie."

Guy 1: "That's because I don't do Bokmakierie, I do Bishop Lavis. But Bokmakierie kinnes [girls] used to be by Grand West [a shopping centre]. And then brasse [brothers, guys] just hear 'bokmakierie' and they're like "too far." They're scared."

(Interview, 16/3/2013)

At a later point in the conversation, I tried to speak to the girls they were with who were very shy, to ask them how they felt about the brand and whether they buy or wear it at all. I was told by one of the boys, "Ok I think she's a bit scared. She's from Kuilsriver. She's

one of those Kuilsriver people. Sorry about that... uptight” (Interview,16/3/2013). I deduced from my discussions that Kuilsriver is a wealthier area, closer to the northern suburbs, and many people see those from Kuilsriver as thinking that they are better than everyone else. Yet 2Bop does sell a certain ‘coloured’ experience of the corner shop and the Cape Flats to coloured people outside of the Flats, and even those differentiated within the Cape Flats by where they are situated. The ‘real’ nostalgia as opposed to the ‘branded’ nostalgia appeared to be more of a hybrid between pleasure and pain. The sense of community and fun of the games was to various degrees also infused with a sense of danger, reflecting the presence of violence and varying material conditions, and this hybrid presented different versions of what it meant to grow up and to be coloured.

Conclusion

As discussed earlier, Jacob Dlamini (2009) speaks about the nostalgia for growing up black in a township under apartheid. Not just the act of wearing the clothes but the act of remembering (through wearing), according to Dlamini (2009:109) has acquired a political meaning. He quotes Huyssen in arguing that we need both the past and the future “in order to come to terms with the present and to effect the work of political imagination that is a prerequisite for the creation of a new world” (Dlamini,2009:109). Nostalgia and memories are about a given place at a given time and in turn play a role in the production of space and time, which fits into the philosophy of ‘future nostalgia’. In some ways, the imagined and unimagined realities of childhood are accessed through the internalisation of the philosophy of the brand. The t-shirts, sweatshirts and caps are costumes which can be used in a ‘live action role-play’ of the games they grew up with, and provide an equal chance to challenge the system as their peers of different races, classes and backgrounds, in order to represent and assist in the creation of a new post-apartheid, and adult, identity. Furthermore, among my participants in Bishop Lavis, 2Bop represents not just the pleasurable experiences of playing games in the corner store, but how it was an element in living in and around violence and deprivation – not just in ways that kept it from the pleasurable ‘ordinary’, but in a way that factored it in.

5. 'GETTING IT': MEANINGS OF AUTHENTICITY, OWNERSHIP AND STREET CRED IN THE CAPE



Figure 17 Two of Rolo's friends, one on the right wearing a 2Bop cap. Taken by Rolo.

Introduction

“Let me just relate two different experiences. I was catching a taxi somewhere around Observatory. Someone got on the taxi, a coloured guy got on the taxi wearing 2Bop. I think a white one of those [t-shirts], just a normal t-shirt. He was skateboarding and he got up and he got onto the taxi, and I wasn't wearing 2Bop or anything but I immediately felt like, that's cool. I felt like it was good, I felt good that I'd seen this. And then I go to a Yoh! Party, those parties that Patrick Visser throws. He's a white guy. And they're cool parties, and whatever, and I see like a whole bunch of white kids at the bar wearing 2Bop and I'm like, I kind of feel a bit of a pang. Not because, I mean I feel, and it's probably a bit of an egoist statement, like I feel like I'm quite good at reading if people are authentic or not, and these kids at the bar, they just didn't feel authentic to me. And I kind of felt like, oh 2Bop's hitting that moment where its starts going outside of 'it's just a thing people know about,' to a thing people wear without knowing about... This argument could apply – the dude getting into the taxi – applies specifically to 2Bop. The girls at the bar could apply to any brand that's gone from being a small brand to a global brand. So in certain situations I read people wearing 2Bop as a signal that we're in a similar mind-set. And in other

situations I can read people wearing 2Bop as 2Bop as just a brand.” – Roger, (Interview, 10/4/2013)

That the brand was ‘authentic’ was a common explanation for why my participants wore 2Bop. Yet Roger’s observations about authenticity reveal the irony and subjectivity of what it means to be ‘authentic’. In many ways, the meaning of ‘authenticity’, i.e. how one knows who or what is authentic, remained somewhat elusive in my research – for many, it is a feeling, a sense. How can Roger *really* know that the coloured guy on the taxi was authentic but the girls at the party were not? Would he feel the same way if the girls were on the taxi and the guys were at the party? It suggested that there was an imagined ‘inner circle’ of authentic 2Boppers who understood what was authentic. It also illustrated the complex mix of participants in my data and how they related to their race, class and each other.

In this chapter I will discuss the theme of authenticity as it emerged among my participants. First I will explore the various meanings and importance that authenticity holds for my participants through three main categories: first coloured participants in Bishop Lavis in whose lives the divisions of apartheid are still extremely salient, and the feeling of 2Bop being an exclusive representation of their identities; second, participants who have been able to traverse the boundaries created by apartheid, and the role of 2Bop as a mediator that helps them to discover and develop an authentic identity; and third, the idea of ‘ownership’ of 2Bop for those looking to create an authentic reality. I will then elaborate on the more ‘superficial’ dimensions of 2Bop – the ‘authenticity’ aspect of having ‘street cred’ or being ‘cool’, and the significance of this.

Authenticity: Race, Transformation, Ownership

Most of my participants straightforwardly said to me that they like the brand “because it is authentic.” What this meant, however, was different in different contexts.

Bishop Lavis: 2Bop and the Ghetto



Figure 18 "Raak Wys" (Watch out). Taken from twobop.tumblr.com

The ghetto is a term appropriated from the American usage, associated with hip hop, which, along with the “hood”, describes an area that is generally economically depressed, usually populated by black or other non-white people and is seen as symbol for cultural or social struggle (Forman,2002:56). My Bishop Lavis participants were most vocal and vehement that 2Bop was a representation of who *they* are. They are the ‘ghetto’, and 2Bop is the ‘ghetto’ – it is the game shops, the corner store, the language, the ‘street’. This extends to there being an entire system in the Cape Flats that they feel one cannot understand if one did not grow up within it. “In the area where we stay in Bishop Lavis this is like the ghetto, so it’s based on slang and so and how we are in the area... we talk slang, ons hangie slange nie [we are who we say we are]. It’s how we are, we want to look that part,” one guy in Bishop Lavis told me. “It’s like a Lavis thing, something that keeps us together” (Interview,16/3/2013).

One major indicator of what a ‘Lavis thing’ meant was language – the Kaapse slang on many of the 2Bop items of clothing. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, just the

name '2Bop' is significant: "The name '2Bop', also takes me back to the corner shop... just the word," said Rolo. Rolo also told me about some of the really popular items:

"There's one called "Gamekop" [game head], which has a twenty cents on it. That is one of the most powerful t-shirts, it's in high demand... Also the "Original Laanies" [original player/main player] top, there were people bidding for that top... 'Laanie' is a strictly coloured word, it says a lot about you – "you are an original lanie". A Lanie is a main guy. The real main guys on the games were the 'kloklanies' – the boss." (Interview, 16/3/2013)



Figure 19 "Original Laanies" (players/main players). Taken from twobop.tumblr.com

There are also other words and phrases such as, "hou jou bek, werk you vrek" [Keep quiet, work hard], "Raak Wys" [watch your back], "Vasbyt" [Bite hard], "hosh" [an expression, often of aggression], "aweh" [a common greeting or affirmative gesture].

Ironically, these clothes that inspire such a proud representation of these participants are not that easily accessible, except through Rolo. The store, and the other stores that sell the brand, are in the City Bowl. One guy in Bishop Lavis said,

"It's not very available... I mean you walk into Sportscene [a commercial streetwear chain], any shop you'll get Quiksilver and Billabong. In any shop. But this, they need to market it a bit better... Ja because the other well-known brands, they put it out there. So it's available, readily available for everybody. Unlike 2Bop. But I mean they will start to sell a lot if they... A lot of

people will start to wear it if it's in more shops... Not a lot of people go to the City Bowl.”
(Interview,16/3/2013)

These participants do not go to the City Bowl, and in addition very rarely, if ever, spend time with white people. It is noticeable for these participants who still mostly occupy the racial and socio-economic categories of apartheid, far away from the city, that there are people who do not “get it” walking easily into shops, wearing and buying what is “theirs”.

“No I won't be surprised [to see a white person wearing it]. I see a lot of whities actually wearing it. I saw on the website as well. The whities are taking over. They trying to steal our brand that we created. That last shoot with that girl and that guy. The whities are doing it good. But you know they did it before we done it because they got more exposure there.” (Interveiw,16/3/2013)



Figure 20 Shoot in arcade. Taken from www.twobop.co.za

Ironically, 2Bop's 'authenticity' reproduces racial divides in some ways and breaks them down in other ways. For Roger, 2Bop is a means to distinguish authentic from inauthentic whites; for many of the coloureds there are no authentic 2Bop whites. A dilemma for the brand is that in order to be commercially viable it has to be in the city where the money and the business are. Furthermore, as I mentioned in the introduction, the brand is only sold in independent store, including boutiques like The Lot and specialised streetwear stores like Shelflife and Baseline. The “nature” of the brand is that

it is an authentic or honest representation of the creators and where they come from. If the brand is only sold in independent stores, its exclusivity becomes even more centred in the City Bowl and its market there, and even less accessible to my participants in Bishop Lavis.

There are other aspects of 2Bop that connect authenticity, exclusivity and identity to clothing among my participants in Bishop Lavis. When I was repeatedly told that I, as white and middle class, and not from Bishop Lavis, would not “get it”, they were referring not just to a fondness for corner shop culture and the language, but to a whole system, one requiring an essential understanding of the roles and workings of gang violence on the Cape Flats. Rolo said, “No one has been killed here who was not supposed to be killed. There were no innocent bystanders killed... Outsiders who don’t know who’s who are the only ones who could accidentally get into trouble. It’s not like other areas – the gangs protect the residents in a way” (Interview, 1/6/2013).

The way that my participants spoke about clothes and fashion was intermingled with references to gangs, violence, and a lack of change. As much as 2Bop represented a pride in being coloured and Cape Flats culture, I also learnt that behaviours and existences on the Cape Flats were still circumscribed by threatening conditions. This is part of the authentic lifestyle that I do not ‘get’, which is ironically not only expressed in what they would wear, but also what these participants would not wear in Bishop Lavis because they might attract the attention of gangs or cause trouble.

“Some 2Bop stuff I wouldn’t wear because it’s rude. The language they use. That’s also catering for the ghetto, with the swearing words on the top. They catering for Bishop Lavis... You have to look here it says “hosh” neh? A few years ago you won’t be able to wear something that says like “hosh” because there’s a lot of 28’s [a prison gang] here by us, so we don’t use that terminology...” – guy in Bishop Lavis (Interview, 16/3/2013)

Kent, who I will discuss more in the next section, said he would not wear “hosh,” “because “hosh” is like “jy!” You know like attention, like when they rob you they like

“hosh, what size daai tekkies? [sneakers]” (Interview,5/4/2013). There were also other dress restrictions, limited by gangs and one’s place in the system, for example:

“They brand you. Like if you wear diamonds you a Stoepa Boy, which is like in Bonteheuwel they have these different gangs, so they are labelled by the clothes they wear. So if you wear a diamond jersey it can cause a lot of trouble and so man. So I think 2Bop is a nice brand but people know they can skel [scold] them, “ok this is the 2Bop boys” and then they maybe start to fight with someone that wears 2Bop and then everyone falls under that whole cloud. So it can cause a lot of trouble.” – guy in Bishop Lavis (Interview,16/3/2013).



Figure 21 "Locals Only, Fut Sek (go away), Ama Game Kop (game heads)". Taken from www.twobop.co.za

There are contradictions in the fact that while 2Bop is evoked as such a strong authentic representation of who they are in the ghetto, there are items of clothing that they would be scared to wear in the ghetto. Thus, in fact, ironically many of the clothes which may be authentic expressions of a certain lifestyle, appear to themselves be directed at a people outside the Cape Flats who do not have to worry about things like that or do not know. For these participants, knowing the ‘system’, how it filters through to what people wear, and Rolo’s suggestion that gangs in some way protect the community, is part of a greater picture of how being coloured is experienced by these participants in Bishop Lavis. When discussing how things have or have not changed in their lives post-apartheid, one guy said,

“Yoh, gangsterism, everyone’s struggling, stuff is getting so expensive, people are starting to kill and doing funny stuff man. So things is getting very dangerous. And I mean the shacks [referring to the predominantly black townships], the people is rich there, they drive cars and stuff, they got dstv and stuff. So, but I think they want to live so. And us here, we struggle. But everybody survives at the end of the day.” (Interview, 16/3/2013).

There was a distinct dissatisfaction at what has not changed, but also not a huge expression of anger or resentment – more one of being connected to Bishop Lavis and their community, despite the lack of transformation. Again this expressed the point about a hybrid of the pleasure and the pain of life in Bishop Lavis, all in the authentic mix. Rolo said, “It makes more sense to live in Lavis. I don’t trust leaving my wife and kid in a place I don’t know... Some guys here haven’t left their street ever. I wouldn’t move because I carry this place with me” (Interview, 1/6/2013).

For these participants, 2Bop is an expression of pride in coloured and Cape Flats culture, and particularly Bishop Lavis. However, the geography, racial and class structure of apartheid means that they remain separated from the city, and are also thus physically separated from 2Bop and their products. Some of this separation is limited because of the massive divisions created by apartheid, but lives are also circumscribed by their entrenchment in a system and a community that both limits them and inspires them.

Traversing the Spectrum

On the other hand, there are those participants, namely my coloured and black ones, that have had a different experience, one that does not keep them *as much* within the confines of apartheid divides. While race and class still remained important factors, there were a number of participants who have travelled the spectrum of their race and class. Alvin, Anthony and Brad are examples of people who come from similar backgrounds, who have moved from a life determined by apartheid, to a life of their own self-determination.

Alvhin, for example, grew up in Athlone, on Cape Flats. Athlone is slightly more affluent than Bishop Lavis, and has less of a reputation for gang violence. Nevertheless, the experience of the corner shop, the language and the video games is the same – the experience of being a coloured child on the Cape Flats. Alvhin said to me, “I guess why I feel it is authentic is because even if I didn’t experience it in exactly the same way, I look at the clothes and I think “I know that, that’s real, I’ve seen it, that’s just how it was”” (Personal Communication,24/9/2013). He believed that the authenticity of the clothes is that they are “an accurate, genuine representation of that experience.” When going back to Athlone to visit his parents, I myself have observed other people from the neighbourhood who are poorer and/or more cut off from the city who arrive at the house looking for legal (or other) advice from him. He said, “I’ve always felt a lot of pressure because I was one of the kids in the neighbourhood who made it, I became a lawyer, I was a kind of example, and I have to live up to that.” When he was in high school and the schools opened up to non-white learners in the early nineties, he moved to a school where very few learners were not white and he told me, “I had to change the whole way that I spoke, because I had such a thick accent, no one understood me” (Personal Communication,24/9/2013). People like Brad, Anthony, Alvhin, Max, Atang, Jitsvinger and Rolo are examples of people who were not born-frees, who did grow up during apartheid, with memories of it, and have made moves out of the racial, social and economic structures of apartheid – but whose identities are still very much connected with past networks and identities.

Jitsvinger had quite strong views about the transformative power of 2Bop, linked to how real and authentic it is. As a strong advocate for the empowerment of the Kaapse dialect, he felt that the language on the clothing was a proper representation of the language and the culture.

“I have this, “Hou jou bek, werk jou vrek” t-shirt. I’ve got it in black and I started using it as a way to speak without speaking... It doesn’t push people away, it makes them curious. You know, speaking in a language that is widely spoken. And that’s what 2Bop does, they succeed in that. They actually make people go, “ok, people can wear this...” I wear 2Bop as a statement to say, “this is me.” They represent me in a way.” (Interview,4/4/2013)



Figure 22 "Hou jou bek, Werk jou Vrek" (Keep quiet, work hard). Taken from twobop.tumblr.com

The clothing, then, is a way to force people to acknowledge a language and a culture which has been oppressed or which has been ascribed negative characteristics by outsiders. On one hand, people who are outside of the language and culture must start to accept a pride and a freedom of people who are no longer being silenced, as people who are (theoretically at least) equal citizens. On the other hand, for people within the language and culture, 2Bop is a way of utilising the fact that coloured people are not being silenced anymore, to discover a pride and identity post-apartheid, and dispel stigma and discrimination towards the language and its negative connotations.

Then again, rather than transforming relationships across divides, there were those for whom the authenticity of 2Bop remained very exclusive. The clearest example of this was Kent, who grew up in various areas on the Cape Flats and at the time of our interview still lived in Mitchell's Plain. However, he spends much of his social and professional life in the City Bowl and Woodstock, which is the very reason I met him. Our interview revealed more contradictions in the processes of navigation of race and

class in a post-apartheid Cape Town. He was extremely defensive of his coloured roots and believed, like my Bishop Lavis participants, that someone outside of that experience would not get it.

“And to me 2Bop is rooted, well for me... in the coloured culture. So, like it’s so representative of who we are as a people, you know... 2Bop has taken a bit of our culture... I mean 2Bop has kind of introduced, like given people like you a window into our culture and who we are. You know, stuff we say. There’s a cap that I just got from them recently that says, “Too damn duidelik.” I grew up saying like too damn duidelik, you know... You know, like the stuff we say growing up, you know, like “aweh.” Like we’ve been saying “aweh” forever. You know, like ‘aweh’s our thing. Like now all these white and black kids are like, “aweh aweh aweh” all the time...” (Interview,21/5/2013).

However, Kent also put a very high premium on individual and independent hard work and innovation to succeed in life. He articulated what he believed to be conflicting attitudes of his towards fellow coloured people, a “love/hate relationship”: on the one hand, a pride in being coloured, in fellow coloured people and coloured ‘culture’; and on the other hand, an anger at what he perceived to be widespread laziness in the coloured community, and the expectation of the government to solve their problems.

“We don’t realise how great we are, there’s a feeling of inferiority... They’re always complaining and I hate them for that. They need to focus on the positive in their own lives... They don’t look for opportunities, grants, etc. They should Google the DTI [Department of Trade and Industry] instead of sneakers. There are free courses and bursaries. My mother is 53 and she is doing her matric now.” (Interview,21/5/2013)

Similarly, Atang creates art that is often socially and politically relevant to South African issues, specifically the need for black people to replace their feelings of inferiority with big ambitions, and felt 2Bop played an important role in this process. He said,

“A lot of black guys in Cape Town don’t believe in themselves... African’s belong in space, we have to go that far. 2Bop is conquering that view. People blame apartheid for so much... People take art and fashion for granted... Instead of complaining, make it better for yourself. People are trying to fight for their rights and the government is not doing anything. Art needs to have a place

to create meaning for people. We need to look out for ourselves. Stop complaining and do things for yourself..." (Interview,27/5/2013)

Rolo provided a particularly interesting example of the traversing of boundaries in Cape Town. As discussed previously, he lives in Bishop Lavis and is extremely proud and defensive of it. However, partly through his dealings with 2Bop, Rolo has met an increasing number of people on the street culture scene in Cape Town, and has narrowed the gap between his life in Bishop Lavis and his life in the City Bowl. Aside from almost single-handedly bringing 2Bop to the Cape Flats, he has also been involved with a popular Cape Town-based blog called *BitchesMustKnow* (BitchesMustKnow), which showcases South African street culture enthusiasts and creatives, and has established himself as a fixture in the street culture scene in Cape Town. Rolo also said he "would laugh if he saw a [2Bop] t-shirt" on someone like me and that it was authentic because it, once again, represented something he related to, something real.

Rolo was also keen to stress that he will never "jump on the hype wagon" and 2Bop is one of the brands that is authentic, "not just hype" (Interview,1/6/2013). Kent also kept saying that it is important that 2Bop does not "sell out": "For me it's more important that 2Bop keeps it real and that they don't sell out because it's considered that they selling to you people [white people]. You know... Um, but more importantly they've never claimed to be anything else but coloured and real to capture our Cape culture" (Interview,21/5/2013).

This discussion turned into an illustration of more of the complexities and contradictions of the way that race and identity manifested among my participants through discussions about 2Bop and authenticity. At one point Kent was quite disparaging about some fellow coloured people:

"a lot of coloured people when they come to the city, they try to prove how coloured they are. Like "I'm coloured from the Plain bra" but you live in Gardens. And like you go to Van Hunks [a trendy restaurant]. But then you trying to speak like all coloured, you know loud and bombastic and boisterous, and I'm like whatever man." (Interview,21/5/2013)

On the other hand though, he said at another point, describing a café on Long Street where he had his work displayed,

“It’s kindof nice and designer. People look at me funny when they see me in there. Coloured people always looking at my bleddy plate. I believe that more coloured people should drink good red wine and eat ciabattas. Why not man? And then you wouldn’t look at me funny. Then you would know that eating good food is really awesome.” (Interview,21/5/2013)

In some ways this speaks to the anxieties and envy of class difference. 2Bop becomes a way of dealing with this – it is something that richer and poorer coloureds can mutually understand, even if only the richer ones can actually afford to buy it.

He further said, “As a business owner who wants a stable business, you know I also need... you also need to know... you can’t be... like there’s no way I’d make money out in Mitchell’s Plain if I had this shop there. People’s gonna come by, you know, or people’s gonna want deals or discounts....” (Interview,21/5/2013). The ways in which he separately defended Cape Flats coloured culture, and his life in the city, made me wonder if this might be connected to personal concerns about selling out, or being seen as selling out. This is an illustration of the contradictions and the difficulties in post-apartheid Cape Town of transformation, and of being someone who is floating or moving somewhere on the spectrum. 2Bop becomes a kind of mediator, speaking to a black or coloured childhood under apartheid, and the successes of the city that have historically been connected with whiteness. These contradictions are certainly not unique to Kent, including other coloured participants. Alvin, who lives in Oranjezicht, a popular middle class area in the City Bowl, appeared to be in a similar position. He also was disparaging of coloured people who move into the city and then suddenly try to “act more coloured” but was self conscious and aware of being a coloured who has in fact moved into a world where he did not want to betray his roots or lose his authentic coloured identity. These and other responses like them seemed to have a lot to do with the anxieties around deepening class divides, associated with degrees of geographical distance. This is coupled with attempts to keep a strong emotional connection across those deepening

divides, a need to maintain contact, but not in ways that felt stuck there and what it represents.

The Importance of Ownership

There are, of course, those who did not experience a coloured or black childhood under apartheid, or who are too young to have experienced one. These participants largely fall into the categories of white people and born-frees. Nevertheless these were also people for whom 2Bop was considered ‘authentic’ or ‘honest’. What I have in common with Motheo and Mohato is that none of us is coloured, and we are all basically ‘born-frees.’ When I asked Mohato if he related to the language, he said,

“A lot of it I understand but I don’t relate. I’m not neutral about it. I think it’s cool that it’s happening... it is from someone’s childhood. I guess it’s the feeling of the authenticity about it, that it did come from someone’s childhood so it is legitimate in some way. I like the idea of it. I like the idea that South African slang on a high fashion, fashionable clothing is cool, it’s great.” (Interview,16/5/2013).

Max is older than me, but also did not have a coloured childhood, and in fact had a fairly multiracial privileged childhood, but despite that also felt connected to the language, as a non-white person, as a black person who has some kind of solidarity that white people would not have with coloured people. “I can’t really relate to the language as much as those who grew up with it. But white people are very closed off to things that have been here all along, that blacks and coloureds have known all along” (25/4/2013). Chloe, on the other hand, who is older than me and white, said, “it really does feel like it’s South African. And for me it’s quite difficult to find anything that feels that way. And for myself personally I’m constantly looking at that, like what makes me feel like I’m South African?” (Interview,9/4/2013)

Chloe: “And I think I don’t know if any other South African brand has ever presented the supposed language of South Africa... Not, I can’t say it represents everyone, but it’s a uniquely

South African language and they put it on a t-shirt and been like “this is our language.” And I think that’s a huge thing.”

Roger: “Ja 2Bop is probably the first instance of a uniquely local way of speaking being on a t-shirt, that people completely want to wear and completely own it.” (Interview,9/4/2013)

Even outside the Cape Flats, my participants displayed a desire to be part of something exclusive and authentic. I also got the impression that seeing Brad and Anthony becoming successful made some of my participants feel like they can be successful too. Roger said, “There’s a thing about, if 2Bop is a label that’s successful in this context that means if I make something it has the possibility to be successful” (Interview,9/4/2013). The feeling is that 2Bop represents Brad and Anthony, people who are real and accessible, who represent a realistic possibility for success. Mohato was excited also by the feeling of being part of something exclusive. “Like yea you don’t get us, like yea I’m in, in like a group or whatever” (Interview,16/5/2013).

A central concept that came out of my interviews, and particularly with Roger, was the idea of ‘ownership’, which he illustrated through his own t-shirt initiative. Roger created a line of t-shirts with the slogan “I benefitted from apartheid” printed on them, somewhat controversially. This was in reaction to an incident in the news at the time (2012) when the chain store Woolworths advertised a job opening and specified that they were looking for non-white candidates, the response to which by many white people was that this was racist and that they should boycott Woolworths (McCarthy, 2012). Roger said when he wore it to the supermarket, “white people tended to look away” but at the liquor store the coloured cashier said “thank you, well done.” He does not wear the t-shirt often, though, as he has received a lot of hate mail from right wing Afrikaners. He reflected on the power of the t-shirt and the power of actually wearing something on your body:

“I’m asking you to put this on your body, to make this part of the way other people see you. And that instantly, the notion of that, you know you wear a statement like that and you walk in public and you have no control over the people who are out there looking at you see the context of that statement. I think that frightens a lot of people... its about the wearing the thing, the putting it on.” (Interview,9/4/2013).

The implication is that in putting on the piece of clothing, therefore, you are owning what it says, you are acknowledging parts of yourself that you may not have acknowledged properly before, and other people are able to engage with that. For a young South African trying to find a place in post-apartheid South Africa and form an identity, 2Bop is a way to own something or be part of something.

In fact, the idea of ownership and the importance of the honesty of the brand is important to other members of post-apartheid society in Cape Town who are trying to find a place where they belong. Brad joked, “I’m waiting for the day when I see some gangster being arrested with 2Bop clothes on” (Interview, 20/2/2013). Rolo does in fact know a number of gangsters or people who have been in prison and many come out of prison and effectively step straight into 2Bop clothes. Brad continued, “these guys come out of prison and 2Bop is something they can own, something they can relate to.” 2Bop allows those people to enter society again with something that is theirs, with something that shows that they are not alone. This again brings in the aspect of a life amidst crime and violence on the Cape Flats. In this case, these are people who are at the centre of the crime and violence – these are the gangsters who inspire the fear or determine the limitations of others in the community, including the children playing video games. Nevertheless, these are people who have to pick up their lives when they have been removed from society, and the pains and pleasures of the culture they come home to, are sewn into a t-shirt they can wear, that is their own, that can be the regaining of contact with the meanings and feelings of the Cape Flats.



Figure 23 Friend of Rolo. Taken by Rolo.

Keeping it Real: What it Means to have ‘Street Cred’

There is another side to 2Bop that enters every consumer’s decision to buy the brand, and that is whether it is ‘cool’ or gives one ‘street cred’. Much of this has to do with trends, streetwear, and growing up wanting to be ‘cool’. Neither Brad nor Anthony ever told me that they did not want the clothes to look good. They, of course, also want to make money. Brad even said at one point, “we didn’t think about the meaning of 2Bop designs in the grand scheme of things. We make the clothes we want to wear,” (Interview, 8/8/2012) and beyond that they do not control what people take out of the brand.

My participants all had their own versions of what was cool when they grew up, what fashions they aspired to. Hayden told me,

“When I was in high school I wanted expensive “drug-dealer shoes” that we couldn’t afford. We associated success with expensive shoes – hot women, football clubs and so on. I started looking

from the ground up... We used to have competitions, Skotane style. We swopped sneakers with our friends at other schools.” (Interview,26/2/2013)

Hayden has over 80 pairs of sneakers now, in his bedroom alone. Rolo too is part of this street scene that specialises in streetwear – knowing it, wearing it, buying it. He indicated some of the significance of clothing to him: “Growing up, keeping our shoes on our feet was more important than getting the shoes... I grew up with hand-me-downs. I used to have one pair of shoes to last the whole year, now I have shoes that I can wear once a year” (Interview,1/6/2013). Rolo “used to have big gold earrings and grills for about ten years,” and pulled out his front teeth because it was fashionable and it was some form of rite of passage.



Figure 24 "Passion Gap" t-shirt illustrating the Cape Flats trend of removing one's front teeth. Taken from twobop.tumblr.com

Jitsvinger too, reminisced about what was cool when he was younger:

“At a certain age there are dress codes that marks a boy who’s made it into manhood. Kindof like an initiation you have to go through. If your older brother gives you his pair of pants, school pants

or whatever, that's actually entitling you within a certain social group. To have access to whatever's there, you know. So if you're older, now you can smoke with the big boys... it came with wearing the Grasshoppers (a brand of shoe) and Nevada's (a clothing brand)..." (Interview, 4/4/2013).

Kent also reminisced about Grasshoppers, which he said were the shoes gangsters wore and so parents were reluctant to buy them – “are you trying to be a gangster?” When he was in high school and everyone was wearing Grasshoppers, he had a pair of “idlers” which are fake Grasshoppers.

“You can see an idler instead of Grasshopper. And I was like, “no man I don't want idlers!”... But then this one Saturday – back then Grasshoppers were R90 or R99, and my mother was like, “Here boy, go buy a pair of Grasshoppers.” And then my sister and I went to the shop and we bought a pair of Grasshoppers and I just walked around the whole day in the house. And grasshoppers have a rubber sole and we had squeaky floors, “queck queck queck” walking up the stairs.” (Interview, 5/4/2013).

Street cred is thus about much more than a superficial ‘cool’ – it is about being macho, about a masculinity that's shaped by the iconography of the gangs. Once again, the meanings of being authentically coloured are connected with the gangs and violence of the Cape Flats.

Another irony and contradiction is that streetwear and street culture themselves are elusive terms. Where, whose and what the ‘street’ is, is not easily defined. One thing is clear: that for my coloured participants, the idea of the ‘street’ is often associated with a danger or menace of some kind, and the kind of masculinity that is represented by surviving it, hanging out there, and come out of it in tact and still cool. However, streetwear is expensive, so the irony is that in order to have ‘street cred’, one in fact has to spend a lot of money. One is not authentically part of street culture if one is not wearing the right sneakers, hoodies, caps, t-shirts, etc. Mohato reflected, “I guess to an extent there might be a bit of classism going on there except people don't wanna mention it, like high end fashion is street fashion. Like we don't wanna say rich shit and not so rich shit...It's like the term ‘urban’. I hate that. Just say black American or African

American, that's what you mean. People don't wanna say things" (Interview,16/5/2013). Although Brad and Anthony told me that they do not actively associate 2Bop with hip hop, Cape Town street culture and streetwear and their connections with 'the hood' or 'the ghetto' have been heavily influenced by the hip hop culture that was born in New York in the 1970s, also out of a context of social and economic deprivation and gangsterism of black people (Saucier, 2011: 133). The versions of dress of the ghetto that assign one street cred connote a capacity to survive and triumph in the 'hood'.

Nevertheless, beyond the respect of the 'street', the clothes also just have to look good in the first place to get people to buy them and see them as cool, and the right people need to wear them to maintain their cool 'authentic' image. Chloe did point out that

"When you start a clothing label you kind of imagine your market. You kind of imagine who's gonna be wearing your stuff. At a starting point you kind of want cool people to be wearing your stuff otherwise it's never gonna get anywhere. It's never gonna be cool if cool people don't wear it. So I think it's a natural thing to be like "I don't want you to be wearing it" you know. It's like the wrong image for me." (Interview,10/4/2013)

There were moments when Anthony and Brad said things that expressed their preferences for who should be wearing their brand. At one particular sale, on display with a number of other brands, a famous local pop singer called Danny K was spotted looking through clothes at the 2Bop stall.⁶ "Maybe we should tell him they're just for display," joked Anthony; but he had no qualms about saying that Danny K was not the kind of person he wanted representing his brand. Rather than either having a cultural and social awareness, or being part of the city bowl scene that buys the brand, Danny K represented something more superficial and inauthentic – his gelled hair and supermodel girlfriend were not, for Anthony, what 2Bop is about. Just as Roger said about the girls at the bar, Danny K does

⁶ Danny K is a South African pop star whose songs are played on popular radio stations, and whose image are less 'street' and more fancy, and who has a history of dating supermodels. Most of his fan base is young, white and middle class, and who consciously occupy a mainstream social scene in terms of music, fashion, and social activities. This is contrary to the street scene, which sees this kind of mainstream popularity as superficial and in many ways the opposite of the hardcore honesty of street culture.

not have the same mind-set. Mohato made reference to the same description of the girls at the bar – “the Elle magazine girls” [because they likely wear 2Bop because they saw it in a fashion magazine]. “I wonder if there are any people who will think twice about wearing 2Bop when they start seeing like the Claremont 16-year olds wearing it?” (Interview, 16/5/2013). For many, 2Bop’s fame originated when one of their sweatshirts was featured on the blog of the Billionaire Boys Club (BBC), a big streetwear brand owned by famous American rapper, singer, producer and fashion designer, Pharrell Williams (BBC Ice Cream, 2012). 2Bop caught the attention of the BBC when they were placed at a stall next to them at Bread and Butter Berlin, the world’s biggest tradeshow for successful street wear brands, in 2012 (Bread and Butter Berlin).



Figure 25 Party in Long Street.

Once again this suggests that in a way 2Bop caters better for City Bowl or wealthier consumers, although people in Bishop Lavis, in the ghetto, often feel they are more authentically part of street culture because they come from the ghetto. On the other hand, there may also be a kind of freedom to this superficiality in post-apartheid Cape Town. Perhaps it creates a levelling effect whereby those who wear the brand become equals in street credibility. Miller’s (2010:33) contention that people buy clothes as much despite as because of the fashion system suggests that many of these participants are aware that they are buying clothes motivated to a large extent by vanity, and get enjoyment out of doing so. One might consider that there are different processes of change at work. Hayden told me that many of his friends he probably would not have met without a

common love for street wear and sneakers. While the specific social and political context of 2Bop may not connect him with other people, if he saw someone on the street wearing a pair of nice sneakers, he would think “that guy knows.” Even Rolo spoke about making friends based on streetwear, and a pride that he could spend an hour talking about one shoe if he wanted to.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have attempted to illustrate the mix of people who buy 2Bop and the different political meanings and importance they take out of the word ‘authenticity’. For most of those in Bishop Lavis, 2Bop is an authentic and proud representation of their identity, and no one else’s, yet it is also a limited expression due to the system they are entrenched in, patrolled by gangs, as well as the particular features of the brand that sells to the City Bowl. For those who have made a transition from the Cape Flats to the City Bowl, 2Bop acts as a kind of mediator between where they were and where they are now, a transition into the city, into a scene where they must retain a part of their authentic identity to create a new sense of self that does not leave their roots behind. Then there is the importance of ‘ownership’ – a need to access and claim the perceived authenticity of the brand in an uncertain city. Finally, there is the appearance of a ‘superficiality’ of 2Bop – one where the consumers see the ‘authenticity’ of the brand as it being ‘authentically’ or ‘legitimately’ cool or ‘real’. Nevertheless, having street cred is also linked to success and respect in the hood, and thus connects back to life on the Cape Flats and its connections with gangs and violence.

6. CONCLUSION: POST-APARTHEID DRESS AND REDRESS



Figure 26 "Salute" (Greeting or gesture of acknowledgement). Taken from www.smithandabrahams.co.za

At the beginning of this thesis I asked a question which was essentially about whether, using 2Bop as a case study, the sphere of fashion has the ability to effect an ethical or political change among young people in post-apartheid Cape Town, thereby assisting in social justice and transformation. I detailed the theories of the politics of recognition, with the intention of applying them to my data and findings. In this conclusion I will try to succinctly explain what those findings are and how they may relate to the more theoretical debates about the politics of recognition.

My participants in Bishop Lavis, to an extent barring Rolo, still very much occupy a space – racially and economically – that accords with the boundaries created by apartheid. They remain separated from the city, geographically and socially, and 2Bop embodies a proud representation not only of who they are, as distinct from those who did not grow up there, and thus do not understand, but a pride in living there, and of a unity with their neighbours and community. Taylor describes recognition as being about collective claims for recognition based on authentic identities, discovered through dialogue. Importantly, Taylor's theory argues that the processes of recognition are about

a unified movement towards a common goal. However, my findings amongst this group are that while they are proudly expressing what they feel to be their 'authentic' identities, they have little desire to share the same space and work with other collective groups that are not part of that collective identity.

Initially it appeared to me that the work of Fraser applied here – that the divides created by apartheid, most notably economic divides, are an obstacle for recognition. However, as my research progressed, I found significant problems with Fraser's theory of dealing with this. There is indeed a significant division between the City Bowl and Bishop Lavis that came out in my data. However, while there was a disdain in Bishop Lavis for how little transformation is happening in their community, there was little to suggest that there was a deep desire to achieve a supposed common goal as those in the City Bowl. Fraser would suggest that the entire political-economic system should be uprooted or that the concept of race should be eliminated altogether in order to address the inequities of the past. However, there was no indication from either end of my participants that this would be an appropriate or desirable solution. The particularities of the situation required a more pluralistic approach. While there were certainly aspects of poverty, deprivation, gang violence that present a serious issue in Bishop Lavis, people there needed to find their own solutions to their own problems.

As Iris Young (1997:157) suggests, Fraser's dichotomy of redistribution and recognition ignores a whole range of other possibilities, and obscures or trivialises what the claims of people might really be. Furthermore, not only is a pluralistic approach needed, but an acknowledgement that people do not all identify in the same way on the basis of, say, being coloured – as Taylor would suggest. Collective identities are not static, and are influenced and transformed by the myriad of other factors at work in Cape Town, including a variety of combinations of geography, class and language. As Appiah (1991) argues, people may be individually identifying with different collective identities in their own ways. In this way, it may be useful to consider 2Bop from Tully's perspective: that it represents not the search for recognition as the end destination, but the importance of the political agency and voice of the individuals as citizens of a democracy.

In another sense, for many of my participants who have travelled across the divides between the Cape Flats and the City Bowl, 2Bop appeared to be a mediator between their childhood identities and their identities being created in the City Bowl. 2Bop seems to be a way that people can shape their own identities in a time of flux in their lives or as entrepreneurs or young professionals trying to make a name for themselves that is current and relevant, but that incorporates their roots. Taylor's assertion that a dialogue is needed to create unity and nation-building in a new democracy helps to understand how 2Bop can be playing this role. However, it appears to be more a dialogue between a past self, and a newly forming current self in order to set a solid foundation for a more predictable future self, and to make peace with a conflicted identity in a conflicted country – rather than a dialogue between consumers of various races and classes to bridge the divisions between them. I do not want to overstate the power of 2Bop to create change among individuals, but I do believe that 2Bop is part of, or at least reflective of, an independent, individual attempt to bring the fond memories of the past into a different world being inhabited now. Often, I believe, for my coloured participants, this has to do with an internal struggle with race – as if there is a need to be loyal to one's roots in the move to a more affluent and recognised realm which is historically related to whiteness.

Furthermore, the data suggests that aspects of Taylor's theory are applicable to the idea of 'ownership' that I brought up earlier in this thesis. For many – including young people and white people – wearing the brand, the actual act of wearing it on one's body – allows one to feel like one can 'own' and embody the perceived ideas and identity represented by the brand, even if those were not one's own personal experiences. It allows one, in a fragmented city, with fragmented memories, to feel like one is part of an exclusive group, that one is not alone. In other words – and Taylor might agree – an authentic identity is being created by the fact that the clothing is perceived to be authentic, and this creates a camaraderie with others who wear the brand. In addition, authenticity applies as much to strong feelings about race and class, as it does to the 'street cred' one gets from wearing the brand.

Aside from what I have explained above, though, there are many levels at which 2Bop may operate, and complex identities that are being enacted and developed in a changing city. There were many different experiences of apartheid, and are many different experiences of Cape Town and of South Africa currently. This is accompanied by a variety of different claims for recognition. As Tully suggests, these are claims that are never going to arrive at a single solution or conclusion, and which are important mainly because they illustrate the freedom that people now have to express their various claims, and the mediums through which they are able to do so. In particular, my data that came out of interviews with my coloured participants illustrate the fluidities of being young, upwardly mobile and coloured, and the desire to be recognised as simultaneously within and beyond the racial boundaries created by the Group Areas Act and what it represented. Furthermore, while it is 2Bop that maintains the connection between the City Bowl and the Cape Flats for participants like Alvin who have strong emotional links with their roots, it also ironically highlights and is a reminder of the limits for some participants to bridging those divides.

Ultimately, my conclusion is that this study has produced findings that are not homogenous, but which rather reflect realities and dynamics among people that are multi-levelled and constantly in flux. These findings do express some link between fashion and the transformation of a new sense of self among my participants, as well as a connection with the politics of recognition. Based on this study, I think there are certain subtle effects and influences that fashion has in social transformation, but also found that this study was too small and my data not solid enough to really come to any firm conclusions about how far this influence stretches.

As I have stressed, I have asked a very open-ended question in this thesis, and it remains so, as it has illustrated that in fact the way that people relate to themselves, each other and their clothing is complicated. However, while my research has shown that a larger study is needed into various aspects of the relationship between fashion and transformation, it also indicates that a bigger study has great potential to produce important findings. Indeed, I believe that this thesis has yielded interesting and significant results. My data

illustrates that it is possible to examine the consumers of a fashion brand and reveal transforming dynamics of race and class among those who wear it. What people wear and how they identify with their clothing can reveal much about evolving senses of self in a society in transition, and within that, implications for the progress of transformation. My participants have illustrated the personal and political meaning and significance imbued in what they wear, and that one's clothing is not only meaningful in terms of one's own personal identity, but is also a powerful vessel of communication to other people about race, class and history.



Figure 27 Brad and Anthony. Taken from http://www.afashionfriend.co.za/sites/default/files/blog/bbb2_2BOP_04.jpg

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